JWJ-QS

Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan—A Quantitative Study

Investigating the views, family life, and well-being of a faith community

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This scientific study was conducted by independent researchers with the cooperation of the Japan branch and world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses. An academic advisory committee of international scholars reviewed the research design, examined the data for validity, and approved this report.

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Review of Research Methodology by Academic Advisors

The Jehovah's Witness (JW) organization in Japan, which has over 200,000 members participating in over 2,800 congregations nationwide, was recently faced with a need to obtain considerable information about the lifestyle, beliefs, and practices of its members. A study was needed to inform public officials and policy makers and to counter very negative media coverage in Japan about the group and its values and activities. Such media coverage has led the government of Japan to consider proposals to limit some Witness activities or even revoke the Church's status as a religious organization entirely, a development with major ramifications. This situation led to a creative and impressive effort to accomplish, within a very short timeline, research needed to obtain evidence-based information relevant to the controversy. The complex research design that was developed may well serve as a model of how to develop research on religious groups in other places. The elements of the approach taken will be described in brief with an assessment of the steps taken and the overall effort.

Two researchers—one a statistician and the other an academic in information science—oversaw the research project as principal and co-principal investigators. The survey design and analysis plan were reviewed by an advisory group of experienced researchers. Findings from the research were developed independently from oversight by the religious organization, which agreed to grant the researchers access to the study population. This made it possible to conduct online survey research to develop a sample of Witness members nationwide that would approximate a true random sample of members throughout Japan.

It is very difficult and potentially quite expensive to attempt a nationwide survey of members of a religious group. In recent decades the internet has made the task more manageable, if a religious organization has a way to connect with members using some of the internet-based research tools that have been developed for such purposes. However, even if an organization has a way of contacting members via the internet, there remain many challenges. Asking all members of a religious organization to submit responses to an internet survey is not practical because of the huge amount of data that would have to be analyzed. Thus, random sampling methods would need to be applied in order to obtain a large enough representative sample of the membership that would allow conclusions to be drawn from the data concerning important variables of interest (i.e., age, gender, length of time in the group, child-rearing methods, etc.).

Also, the sample must be large enough to allow analysis on various variables of import. An initial step was to randomly select 150 congregations in Japan, with at least one congregation included from each of the 47 prefectures in Japan. This was accomplished by an experienced researcher not affiliated with the Witness organization but who is a member of the advisory committee. Then, with email addresses furnished by the national JW office, emails were sent to contact persons in each of the 150 congregations (church elders) explaining the research project and asking them to send the link to the survey instrument to all members of the 150 congregations who met the certain eligibility criteria. Those eligible were sent a link to the survey instrument that had been developed

to focus on areas where information was needed. The survey instrument was filled out online anonymously to ensure confidentiality of responses.

Eligibility criteria included being 18 or older, a baptized member of the congregation currently attending a Japanese-language congregation, and who had been involved in sharing their faith over the past six months. Over 11,000 eligible members were invited to participate, and over 8,000 requested and received the survey link. After some testing to make certain the survey instrument worked properly, the research was conducted in two waves in January 2024. The two waves of the survey resulted in a total of 7,640 surveys being completed. A total of 444 responses were deleted, leaving 7,196 responses that were used in the analysis. Respondents not meeting eligibility criteria (160) were dropped from the sample, as were 239 respondents whose responses indicated a social desirability pattern (answering all five questions on the Socially Desirable Response Set* with the same extreme response). Also dropped from the sample were 45 respondents who implausibly reported a baptism year prior to their birth year.

The overall research design and plan were reviewed by an advisory group of experienced academics who have been involved for decades doing research on minority religions in various countries. Academics on the advisory group were not members of the JWs. Thus, although the research was carried out by investigators who were members of the JW community, the use of an independent advisory group lends credence to the effort. It is also worth noting that other elements of the research design (random selection of congregations, anonymous submissions, use of validated measures such as the social desirability scale, transparency of the data gathering and analysis, plus the comprehensive statement of limitations of the research design) add overall validity to the project.

The approach described above, including the important role of an advisory group of independent researchers, demonstrates the efficacy of the multi-level methods used, which resulted in a large data set that allowed analysis of many aspects of JW life. The instrument itself was lengthy, with 50 main sets of questions organized into four major areas of JW life: religious factors, family life, general attitudes, and health and well-being. These data will be useful in responding to the criticisms of JWs that have developed in Japan, and the methods developed for the survey will, we believe, serve as a model when other religious groups or religion scholars want to find out details of the lives of members of a religious group.

Academic Advisory Committee for JWJ-QS

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*See Ron D. Hays, Toshi Hayashi, and Anita L. Stewart, "A Five-Item Measure of Socially Desirable Response Set," *Educational and Psychological Measurement* 49, no. 3 (Autumn 1989): 629–636, https://doi.org/10.1177/001316448904900315.

Table of Contents

SECTION ONE

A Systematic Study of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan

Introduction

Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan—A Quantitative Study (JWJ-QS) examines the attitudes, values, and practices of Jehovah's Witnesses. In 2023, this Christian group had some 214,000 adherents in Japan, with a ratio of about 1:583 to the general Japan population (124,752,000), and about 9 million Jehovah's Witnesses practicing their faith in 239 countries and territories worldwide.[1]

Jehovah's Witnesses (JWs), a religious community known for publicly sharing its beliefs, originated in the late 19th century in the United States, where they were known as Bible Students. They were first present in Japan in the 1920s, though very few in Japan responded to their message until the late 1940s. Beginning in the postwar period, however, a growing number of Japanese adopted the Jehovah's Witness (JW) faith.[2] A 1977 quantitative sociological study of Jehovah's Witnesses conducted in Japan theorized that since the country had undergone drastic social change and increasing secularization, the appeal of the religion lay partly in its nonmaterialist outlook, advice on family and child-rearing, and community cohesion.[3] No similar quantitative study of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan has been done in the intervening decades.

The lack of scientific data on Jehovah's Witnesses has come into sharp focus in the context of recent second-generation controversies regarding religious minorities. Following the assassination of former prime minister Shinzo Abe in July 2022, by the adult son of a member of the Unification Church, an eruption of inflammatory rhetoric has developed against minority religions.[4] Some second-generation activists who are former Jehovah's Witnesses or were reared by Witness parents have joined the campaign, calling on the government to restrict the religious practices of Jehovah's Witnesses based on allegations related to their child-rearing, parental rights, and medical choices.

Missing from the public discourse and academic literature are the perspectives of those who currently comprise the Jehovah's Witness faith community, including first- and second-generation adherents. For this reason, a team of independent researchers interested in the scientific study of religion has conducted a methodologically rigorous survey of Jehovah's Witnesses from all prefectures of Japan. The survey questionnaire was developed in cooperation with the national office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan and world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in the United States. An international, multidisciplinary academic advisory committee reviewed the research methodology, survey design, and data analysis. (The advisors are not part of the religious community.) The academic advisors' recommendations were incorporated into this study report.

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[1] *2023 Service Year Report of Jehovah's Witnesses Worldwide: 2023 Country and Territory Reports*, https://www.jw.org/en/library/books/2023-Service-Year-Report-of-Jehovahs-Witnesses-Worldwide/2023-Country-and-Territory-Reports/.

[2] "Japan," in *1998 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1998), 66–161.

[3] Bryan R. Wilson, "Aspects of Kinship and the Rise of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan," *Social Compass* 24, no. 1 (1977): 97–120.

[4] Levi McLaughlin, "The Abe Assassination and Japan's Nexus of Religion and Politics," *Current History* 122, no. 845 (2023): 209–16.

Research Objectives

JWJ-QS was designed to accomplish four main research objectives:

1. Identify demographic characteristics and religious motivations of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan
2. Examine the family life of those who have become Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan—their overall family satisfaction and functioning, marital relationships, approaches to child discipline, and communication about sex and religion
3. Investigate the attitudes and values of those within the Jehovah's Witness community—their priorities, concerns, and social responsibilities
4. Examine the health and psychological well-being of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan

Survey Design

The survey questionnaire consisted of some 50 main sets of questions organized into four thematic sections that corresponded with the research objectives. Table 1.1 shows the four themes and related topics. The section on religious factors identified who Jehovah's Witnesses are, what attracts them to the religion, and how they perceive the religion affects their lives. The section on family life examined family satisfaction, marital relationships, and child-rearing attitudes and practices. The general attitudes section investigated their values, priorities, concerns, and social responsibilities. The last section examined the health practices and psychological well-being of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan.

Table 1.1. Survey themes

Religious factors	Family life	General attitudes	Health and well-being
Who become JWs	Satisfaction	Values, priorities	Health habits
Religion's attraction	Marital relationship	Concerns	Medical treatment
Perceived changes	Child-rearing	Social responsibilities	Psychological well-being

At the end of the survey, participants had the option to add comments related to the survey topics. This report includes selected comments that reflect the findings from the quantitative analysis.

Methodology

The study used an anonymous, online survey to collect data from a sample of baptized adult Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan. The Witness community does not keep a national registry of congregants' names and contact information, so a random sample of individuals was not possible. Therefore, the study used a random cluster sampling of congregations aimed to approximate a representative sample of the faith community. The research design included the following methodological aspects.

Random cluster sampling. The principal investigator (PI) and co-principal investigator (Co-PI) requested a member of the academic advisory committee familiar with the geography of Japan to randomly select 150 congregations out of 2,807 Japanese-language congregations. The number of congregations selected in each of the 47 prefectures ranged from 1 to 8. The PI obtained from the national office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan the email addresses of contact persons (congregation elders) in the randomly selected congregations. Survey invitations and links were emailed from the PI to the respective contact persons, who then sent invitations by email or text message to all congregants who met the eligibility criteria.

Eligibility criteria. Persons eligible to participate in the survey were baptized Jehovah's Witnesses aged

18 or older who were currently attending a Japanese-language congregation in Japan and had actively engaged in sharing their faith in the public ministry during the past six months. After the survey period ended, contact persons from the selected congregations emailed a report to the PI with the number of eligible congregants who received the survey invitation (totaling 11,344) and the number of invited congregants who requested and received the survey links (totaling 8,197).

Provision for assistance. With the goal of having a sample as representative as possible and the desire not to exclude persons who met the eligibility criteria but who needed assistance to take the survey, allowances were made for respondents to have assistance reading the questions or using an electronic device. Most of the 7,196 respondents (86.4%) reported that they took the survey without any assistance. (For more information on sample size, see below.) Some (8.1%) reported that they received help to use an electronic device, 3.2% needed help reading the questions, and 2.3% needed both.

Survey period. A one-day soft launch period confirmed the functioning of links and the survey platform before beginning the full survey launch. The survey was conducted in two waves, each lasting five days, starting January 5 and closing January 14, 2024. The online survey platform KoboToolbox[5] allowed several links to be sent concurrently to the selected 150 congregations, resulting in improved data management and uninterrupted submissions over the two wave periods. The survey platform automatically recorded the start time and the end time of respondents to complete the survey, which averaged 102 minutes.

Data Processing

After the close of the survey, data were exported from the KoboToolbox survey platform server to a Microsoft Excel document. The quantitative data set for statistical analysis was anonymized and de-identified. As explained in the informed consent, those willing to be contacted for possible future research could enter their contact information, which data were kept confidential and separate from the data set used for quantitative statistical analysis.

Response rate. Survey submissions during the first wave of 75 congregations numbered 3,828 and during the second wave of 75 congregations numbered 3,812. During the 10-day survey period, the total number of submissions was 7,640 out of 11,344 invited congregants, resulting in a response rate of 67.3%.

Data cleaning. For data integrity, a data-cleaning process was conducted to ensure that only qualified respondents were kept in the sample for statistical analysis.

A total of 160 respondents opened the survey link but were determined to be ineligible based on their responses to questions regarding five eligibility criteria. The survey platform was formatted so that it automatically denied access to the online survey to any respondents whose answers indicated that they did not meet all five criteria. The following is a breakdown of respondents who were ineligible to complete the survey: 107 reported that they currently did not attend meetings in a Japanese-language congregation; 39 reported being minors under 18 years of age; 10 reported not being actively engaged in the public ministry in the past six months; 8 did not consent to take the survey; and 1 reported not being baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. (Five individuals were disqualified on two eligibility criteria items.)

To ensure high quality data, researchers included a measure to identify respondents who showed a clear pattern of socially desirable responses, that is, replies that were intended to be socially desirable, or

[5] KoboToolbox allowed confidential data collection that fully complied with the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation, with data security measures, restricted password-protected access, data encryption, virus and intruder firewall protections, and skip logic functions. The one submission per respondent feature was selected to allow only one survey to be submitted from a device (https://www.kobotoolbox.org/).

favorable, rather than the respondents' actual opinions or experiences.[6] Based on their giving only the most favorable responses in the five-item scaled measure, the submissions of 239 respondents were removed.

Next, data cleaning identified and removed 45 submissions that lacked intrasubject reliability (e.g., respondents implausibly reporting a baptism year prior to or same as their birth year). In total, 444 submissions were removed from the data set. In this report, some numbers are rounded so that the sum totals 100%.

Sample

After data cleaning, the total sample consisted of 7,196 individuals. This section describes characteristics of the JW study population. Where general population data for Japan were available, the demographic characteristics of the sample were compared to the distribution of the general population, although differing measures used in national studies did not allow direct comparisons.

Gender and age distribution. Table 1.2 compares the percentage of the sample with the general population ages 18 and over by gender and age group. In continuity with the gender breakdown since the religion's earliest days in Japan, Jehovah's Witnesses have more females (71.0%) compared to the general population (51.8%).[7] In Japan and around the world, women tend to be more religious than men[8] and older adults tend to be more religious than younger adults.[9] Similarly, for the sample population of Jehovah's Witnesses, 48.6% were older adults aged 60 and over, compared to 36.9% middle-aged adults from ages 40 to 59 and 14.5% young adults from ages 18 to 39.

Table 1.2. Japan population and JW sample by gender and age group

	Total	Male	Female	Young adults (ages 18–39)	Middle-aged adults (ages 40–59)	Older adults (ages 60+)
Japan general population, 2022 (ages 18+)	107,209 (in thousands)	48.2%	51.8%	26.7%	32.6%	40.7%
JW sample	7,196	29.0%	71.0%	14.5%	36.9%	48.6%

Source (Japan population): e-Stat, Statistics of Japan, "Population Estimates / Annual Report," Table number 1, Population by Age (Single Years), Sex and Sex ratio - Total population, Japanese population, October 1, 2022, accessed and computed by the principal investigator, January 25, 2024, https://www.e-stat.go.jp/en/stat-search/files?page=1&stat_infid=000040045487.

Note: The Excel report of the "Population Estimates / Annual Report" is accessible through the e-Stat link provided above. To permit a comparable analysis with the JW sample, the total Japan population was adjusted to include only those 18 years and above. Those under age 18 were removed and percentages were calculated for the total sample, gender, and age distribution.

[6] Ron D. Hays, Toshi Hayashi, and Anita L. Stewart, "A Five-Item Measure of Socially Desirable Response Set," *Educational and Psychological Measurement* 49, no. 3 (Autumn 1989): 629–636, https://doi.org/10.1177/001316448904900315.

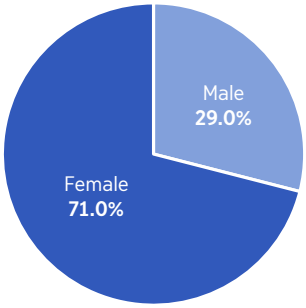
[7] Wilson, "Aspects of Kinship," 107–8.

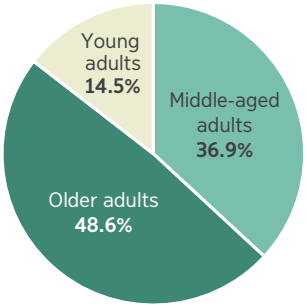
[8] Pew Research Center, "The Gender Gap in Religion around the World," March 22, 2016, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2016/03/22/the-gender-gap-in-religion-around-the-world/.

[9] Pew Research Center, "The Age Gap in Religion around the World," June 13, 2018, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2018/06/13/the-age-gap-in-religion-around-the-world/.

The charts in Figure 1.1 show the distribution of the sample population of Jehovah's Witnesses by gender and age.

Figure 1.1. Sample distribution by gender and age





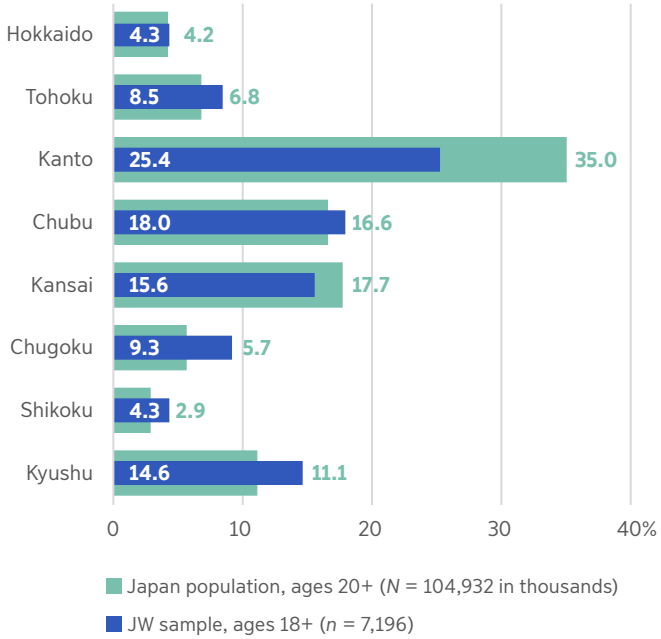
Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 109 years.

I think this survey gave me a good opportunity to reflect on myself.

—Male, 40s, Chubu region

Regional and area distribution. The random cluster sample selection included congregations across all prefectures. Figure 1.2 compares the percentages of the sample with the general adult population in each of the eight geographic regions in Japan. The sample had slightly higher percentages in Chugoku and Kyushu and a lower percentage in Kanto. Differences between the general population and sample population might be attributed to the number of congregations selected in each region to participate in the survey. Respondents also identified their geographic area: from seaside areas, 27.6% (n = 1,988); from inland areas, 57.2% (n = 4,112); and from mountainside areas, 15.2% (n = 1,096).

Figure 1.2. Percent distribution of Japan population and JW sample by region



Source (Japan population): e-Stat, Statistics of Japan, "Population Estimates / Annual Report," Table number 10, Population by Age (Five-Year Groups) and Sex for Prefectures - Total population, Japanese population, October 1, 2022, accessed and computed by the principal investigator, January 25, 2024, https://www.e-stat.go.jp/en/stat-search/files?stat_infid=000040045496.

Note: General population data are for those ages 20 and over; sample population is for those ages 18 and over. A direct comparison with the JW sample of those 18 and over was not possible because the Japan population reported clusters of five-year age groups. The percentages of those aged 20 and over of each region were computed by first summing across each respective prefecture then calculating a percentage for the total population aged 20 and over.

Education. Table 1.3 shows the education level of the sample population, ages 18 and over, with the available data for the Japan general population, ages 15 and over. Some 95.2% of JW respondents continued schooling beyond compulsory education (6 years of elementary school plus 3 years of lower secondary school, equivalent to junior high school). Of the JW sample, 58.4% graduated from high school and over one-third (36.7%) completed post-secondary education. In the JW sample, 2 respondents reported having no formal education and 52 respondents (0.7%) did not report their education level.

Table 1.3. Education level, Japan population and JW sample population

Education level	Japan population, ages 15+ (*N* = 108,259 in thousands)	JW sample, ages 18+ (*n* = 7,196)
Elementary school or junior high school	11.2%	4.1%
Senior high school or middle school	35.0	58.4
Junior college or higher professional school	12.8	24.4
College, university or graduate course	20.2	12.3

Source (Japan population): Statistics Bureau Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, *Japan Statistical Yearbook 2024* (Tokyo: Statistics Bureau Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2024), 63, Table 2-9, Population 15 Years Old and Over by Age Group and Educational Level (2000 to 2020), https://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/nenkan/73nenkan/zenbun/en73/book/index.html#page=96.

Note: The table includes the main levels of education. The percentages in the table do not ladder to 100% and figures are rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent.

Occupation status. Using the employment classification of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), the JW sample was distributed across all occupation groups. As shown in Table 1.4, most (50.5%) had occupations related to service, clerical, sales, or transportation occupations; and 16.2% were employed in administration and management, and in professional and engineering occupations.

Table 1.4. Occupations, Japan population and JW sample population

Employment by occupation	Japan employed population (*N* = 67,230 in thousands)	Employed JW sample (*n* = 4,154)
Administrative and managerial workers	1.8%	2.2%
Professional and engineering workers	19.0	14.0
Clerical workers	20.8	10.6
Sales workers	12.3	8.9
Service workers	12.2	27.2
Security workers	1.9	0.5
Agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers	3.0	1.7
Manufacturing process workers	12.9	6.0
Transport and machine operation workers	3.2	3.9
Construction and mining workers	4.1	7.0
Carrying, cleaning, packaging, and related workers	7.3	8.9

Source (Japan population): Statistics Bureau Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, *Statistical Handbook of Japan 2023* (Tokyo: Statistics Bureau Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2023), 130, Table 12.3 Employment by Occupation, https://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/handbook/pdf/2023all.pdf#page=145.

Note: The table includes the main occupations of interest that correspond to sample population. The percentages in the table do not ladder to 100% and figures are rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent.

Not reported in the table above are another 4.8% (*n* = 343) of the total sample who selected "other" as option for occupation and 0.6% (*n* = 41) did not report any occupation. The JW questionnaire also provided response options in addition to occupations, with the following percentages for the total sample: unpaid homemakers (29.2%), students (0.3%), or on family or maternity leave (0.1%). Others without occupations identified themselves as unemployed (10.2%), retired (1.3%), or with disability (1.1%). Of all female respondents, 41.0% self-identified as unpaid homemakers.

Employment and economic status. The employment rate for the JW sample population was 57.7% (4,154 employed divided by 7,196 total sample) compared to Japan's employment rate as reported in the 2022 census of 60.9%.[10] The employment rate of those of retirement age of 65 and over for the JW sample population was 27.4% (758 ÷ 2,771) compared to 25.2% for the Japan total population.[11] The unemployment rate for the JW sample population was 4.3% for those aged 18 to 64 (151 ÷ 3,547) and 15.1% for those aged 18 and over (736 ÷ 4,890). (The 4.3% is a computed unemployment rate for the population aged 18 to 64 years divided by labor force. This is different from the 10.2% for all age groups in the total sample who self-identified as unemployed.) Of those who reported being unemployed, 79.5% (*n* = 585) were aged 65 and over. The unemployment rate reported for Japan was 2.6%.[12] The differences between the general and sample populations may be partially attributed to the age distribution differences between the sample and national populations.

In the JW survey, respondents provided a self-assessment of their economic situation and financial difficulty using five categories related to household spending. The results from the JW sample were as follows: 7.8% of the total JW sample indicated they could afford expensive or costly items (e.g., home, car); 46.1% could easily purchase appliances; 30.3% had enough money for food and clothes but had difficulty buying large appliances (e.g., TV, refrigerator); 8.5% had enough money for food but had difficulty buying clothes; 2.4% could "hardly make ends meet" with "not enough money for food." (An additional 4.9% did not report their economic status.) Combining the bottom two categories of this five-point measure—difficulty buying clothes (8.5%) and difficulty making ends meet even for food (2.4%)—the total JW sample reporting economic difficulty at these levels was 10.9% (*n* = 787). Although direct comparisons with the general population are not possible because different measures are used, the relative poverty rate for the national sample in 2021 was 15.4%.[13] (The "relative poverty rate" is defined as "the ratio of people living below the poverty line.")

To provide an approximate comparison for the most vulnerable subgroups, two economic measures are used from the MHLW report—the relative poverty rate and a self-assessment of living conditions by which respondents rated their financial situation as "very comfortable," "somewhat comfortable," "normal," "somewhat difficult," or "very difficult."[14]

In the MHLW national sample, the two demographic groups reporting the highest poverty rates were single-adult households (over age 18 and under age 65) with minor child(ren) with a poverty rate of 44.5% and single females aged 65 and older who live alone with a poverty rate of 44.1%.[15] Although the measures used in the MHLW and JW surveys do not use the same metrics, both serve as subjective indicators of economic assessment. Using the same demographic subgroups, the percentage of JW single adults in households with minor child(ren) aged 18 to 64 who reported economic difficulty was reported at 16.0% (8 ÷ 50), and for JW

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[10] Statistics Bureau Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, *Japan Statistical Yearbook 2024* (Tokyo: Statistics Bureau Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2023), 429, Table 19-1, Population Aged 15 Years Old and over by Labour Force Status, https://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/nenkan/73nenkan/zenbun/en73/book/index.html#page=462.

[11] e-Stat, Statistics of Japan, "Labour Force Survey," Table number 16, Employment rate by age group, accessed and computed by the principal investigator, January 25, 2024, https://www.e-stat.go.jp/en/stat-search/files?page=1&layout=datalist&toukei=00200531&tstat=000001226583&cycle=1&year=20230&month=24101211&tclass1=000001226833&tclass2=000001226834&stat_infid=000040130356&result_back=1&tclass3val=0.

[12] Statistics Bureau Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, *Japan Statistical Yearbook 2024* (Tokyo: Statistics Bureau Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2023), 429, Table 19-1.

[13] Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), "Summary Report of Comprehensive Survey of Living Conditions 2022," July 4, 2023, 14, https://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/database/db-hss/dl/report_gaikyo_2022.pdf.

[14] MHLW, "Summary Report of Comprehensive Survey of Living Conditions 2022," July 4, 2023, 14, 16, https://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/database/db-hss/dl/report_gaikyo_2022.pdf.

[15] The findings regarding older females are based on a separate study which drew on the MHLW data and were reported in: Yuki Nikaido, Amane Shimazaki, and Takuro Negishi, "More than 40% of Single Elderly Women Struggle to Live in Poverty," *Asahi Shimbun,* March 8, 2024, https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/15192214.

single females aged 65 and older who live alone, 19.6% (72 ÷ 367).

The MHLW's self-assessment of living conditions found the highest degree of difficulty (combining "somewhat difficult" and "very difficult") in two demographic groups: households with minor child(ren) (54.7%) and households composed of single mothers with child(ren) (75.2%).[16] Using similar subgroups in the JW sample, economic difficulty was reported by 10.6% (157 ÷ 1,478) and 21.7% (5 ÷ 23), respectively.

These approximate comparisons, though using different economic measures, suggest that the JW study population experience less economic difficulty than the general population.

Findings from the JWJ-QS study indicate that those facing economic difficulty in Japan come from a wide range of employment and education backgrounds. For example, of the 173 who reported having the most economic difficulty (not enough money to buy food), 17 (9.8%) were in professional and engineering occupations and 21 (12.1%) were service workers. All had formal education: 109 (63.0%) graduated from high school, 23 (13.3%) from vocational school, and 13 (7.5%) from university. Their economic difficulty does not seem to be related to employment type or education level but may reflect broader economic conditions in Japan.

Role in the congregation. To understand the composition of the JW sample, knowing their general level of involvement in the ministry and congregation is useful. All baptized males and females are unpaid "ministers" who share the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses with others. Almost half of the survey respondents (47.6%; n = 3,426) are "publishers" who participate in the ministry for an unspecified amount of time every month. The remainder (52.4%; n = 3,770) identified themselves as "pioneers" who commit to a certain number of hours, usually with a goal of 30, 50, or more hours per month. In addition to the public ministry, some men are appointed as elders and ministerial servants to support the congregation in various ways, such as facilitating meetings and caring for the spiritual needs of congregants. Almost two-thirds of male respondents (65.0%; n = 1,355) have congregation roles as either elders or ministerial servants. The degree of involvement of the JW sample in Japan is consistent with the high commitment other researchers have identified as characteristic of the faith community elsewhere.[17]

Of the 1,355 elders and ministerial servants, on the five-point scale of economic status, 89.3% (n = 1,210) rated their economic status at the three mid to high levels and 7.8% (n = 106) indicated lower economic status based on the two difficulty levels. Similarly, of the 3,770 "pioneers," who volunteer more time in the public ministry, 85.9% (n = 3,240) reported an economic status at the mid to high levels and 10.2% (n = 385) indicated lower economic status. Economic status does not seem to be related to congregation roles.

Conclusion

The JWJ-QS project addresses an important need by providing research-based information about an understudied religious community. The random cluster sampling method, a sample size of over 7,000 across all prefectures, the regional distribution that approximates that of the general population, and a demographic breakdown characteristic of the religious group in Japan suggest that the study population approximates a representative sample. The large sample, sound methodology, and comprehensive survey design provide high-quality data from which to study the attitudes, values, relationships, and well-being of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan.

[16] MHLW, "Summary Report of Comprehensive Survey of Living Conditions 2022," July 4, 2023, 16, https://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/database/db-hss/dl/report_gaikyo_2022.pdf.

[17] George D. Chryssides, *Jehovah's Witnesses: A New Introduction* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022).

SECTION TWO

Religious Attitudes and Experiences

Based on the findings in Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan—A Quantitative Study, this section reports main characteristics of Jehovah's Witnesses (JWs) in Japan that are related to these key questions about their religious attitudes and experiences:

1. Who become Jehovah's Witnesses, and when, how, and why have they done so?
2. Who have left the faith for a time, and why have they returned?
3. How do Jehovah's Witnesses perceive their relationships—in their congregation, with relatives and nonrelatives, and with society in general?

The findings illuminate the growth of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan, characteristics of conversion, personal attractions to the religion, and general social relations.

Religious conversion is complex and multifaceted, affecting one's core identity, belief system, and interpersonal relationships. How the wider society views a given religious group and those who pursue spiritual interests by following a certain path depends in part on the sociocultural context.[1] One aspect of context is the extent to which a culture values conformity to traditional norms. Japanese culture overall has historically been described as embracing such values as cooperation and group harmony.[2] Even while recent scholarship notes evidence of individualistic tendencies in Japanese society, certain collective features of society persist.[3]

Traditional belief systems could be considered one such example. Although the 1947 Constitution of Japan "created a free-market religious economy for the first time in Japanese history," Shinto and Buddhist practices and institutions still dominate, whereas "Christianity remains a small minority religion."[4] Various personal and social motivations factor into one's decision to become part of a religious community. In any culture, it may be the case that the general population does not understand how and why individuals conduct an active search and consciously decide to embrace a lesser-known religion that the majority might view with suspicion.[5]

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[1] Lewis R. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

[2] See, for example, Harry C. Triandis. *Individualism and Collectivism.* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995).

[3] Yuji Ogihara, "Temporal Changes in Individualism and Their Ramification in Japan: Rising Individualism and Conflicts with Persisting Collectivism," *Frontiers in Psychology* 8 (2017): Article 695, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00695; Shinichi Hirota, Kiyotaka Nakashima, and Yoshiro Tsutsui, "Psychological Motivations for Collectivist Behavior: Comparison between Japan and the U.S.," *Mind & Society* 22 (August 2023): 103–28, https://doi.org/10.1007/ts11299-023-00298-y.

[4] Mark R. Mullins, "Christianity in Contemporary Japanese Society," in *Handbook of Contemporary Japanese Religions*, ed. Inken Prohl and John Nelsen (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2012), 136–37, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004234369_007.

[5] Erica Baffelli, "Fear and the Construction of Minority Religions in Japan," *Religion, State & Society* 51, no. 3 (2023): 223–37; James T. Richardson, "The Active vs. Passive Convert: Paradigm Conflict in Conversion/Recruitment Research," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 24, no. 2 (1985): 163–79, https://doi.org/10.2307/1386340.

The role of parental influence in the transmission of religious values and affiliation has been the subject of much scholarly research, though the majority of studies have been conducted in the United States. There is a scholarly consensus that parents "are the most powerful and proximal influence on adolescent" religion and spirituality.[6] In some faith traditions, religious identity is assumed to be transmitted at birth. In others, transmission may primarily involve instructing children in the practice of rituals and traditions. Whereas in others, transmission mostly involves the imparting of doctrines and standards of behavior.

This research study inquired as to whether individuals in Japan experienced the opportunity to exercise personal autonomy, for instance, regarding the time and study they invested before deciding to be baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses. Some sociologists of religion describe JW doctrine as "rational" and "coherent,"[7] in part because the decision to be baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses is normally preceded by a period of study of (biblical) reasonings underpinning JW beliefs and practices. The study period can represent a significant investment of time and effort on the part of teacher and student to help the student decide if they accept JW doctrinal concepts and desire to align their lives with the community's moral precepts. Respondents who as children were raised in the faith by their Witness parents report on whether or not their commitment to the religion was a personal choice made after gaining an understanding of its beliefs and practices.

Original attraction and commitment to a religion can change over time. Sustained commitment to remain in a religion involves an ongoing assessment of what the religion expects and offers.[8] This study measures Jehovah's Witnesses' original attraction to the religion, different aspects of their conversion process, and their current motivations for being in the religion. Similar to other religions, what it means to belong to the JW faith community may vary depending on one's age, cohort, and generation of believers in the family. For example, those who are first in their family to become Jehovah's Witnesses would likely have less support than would second-generation JWs who have relatives who share their beliefs. The research findings quantify the respective proportions of those with JW and non-JW parents and growth patterns of the religious community over time with these first- and second-generation converts.

In Japan, recent controversies about minority religions and the second generation (Nisei) have raised questions about the nature of the transmission of religious faith from parents to children. As previously noted, researchers have found that across various types of religious groups, parents have a strong influence on their children's religious orientation.[9] Among the factors influencing religious transmission from generation to generation are the quality of parent-child relationships, relative conservativism, religious values, consistency of the practice of and communication about religious beliefs, and the role of grandparents in religious socialization.[10] The gender of parent and child has also been shown as salient in successful

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[6] Annette Mahoney, *The Science of Children's Religious and Spiritual Development* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 42, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108874342. For a meta-analysis, see Melanie Stearns and Cliff McKinney, "Connection between Parent and Child Religiosity: A Meta-Analysis Examining Parent and Child Gender," *Journal of Family Psychology* 33, no. 6 (2019): 704–10, https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000550.

[7] James A. Beckford, *The Trumpet of Prophecy* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975), 119; Bryan R. Wilson, "Aspects of Kinship and the Rise of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan," *Social Compass* 24, no. 1 (1977): 100.

[8] Vassilis Saroglou et al., "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Cognitive, Emotional, Moral, and Social Dimensions of Religiousness Across Cultures," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 51, nos. 7–8 (2020): 551–75, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022120946488.

[9] Adam Gemar, "Parental Influence and Intergenerational Transmission of Religious Belief, Attitudes, and Practices: Recent Evidence from the United States," *Religions* 14, no. 11 (2023): Article 1373, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14111373; Jesse Smith, "Transmission of Faith in Families: The Influence of Religious Ideology," *Sociology of Religion* 82, no. 3 (Autumn 2021): 332–56, https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/sraa045.

[10] Christopher D. Bader and Scott A. Desmond, "Do as I Say and as I Do: The Effects of Consistent Parental Beliefs and Behaviors upon Religious Transmission," *Sociology of Religion* 67, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 313–29, https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/67.3.313; Smith, "Transmission of Faith"; Vern L. Bengtson, "The Unexpected Importance of Grandparents (and Great-Grandparents)," chap. 5 in *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down across Generations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

transmission, with mothers generally more influential than fathers, and sons more receptive than daughters.[11] Research of conversion among Japanese to nontraditional religions likewise indicates strong parental religious influence, particularly that of mothers, in intergenerational affiliation.[12]

Regarding conversion among Jehovah's Witnesses, one ethnographic study of intergenerational transmission in JW families in a non-Christian culture found that children with JW parents made their decision to become and remain JWs, not based on one pivotal moment, but resulting from a process of learning over time and reaching the conclusion that the beliefs were rational and beneficial.[13] In the current JW study population in Japan, respondents came from a variety of familial and generational situations, affording an opportunity to examine patterns of intergenerational religious transmission.

Globally, religious affiliation and commitment have declined among younger adults, and individualism is on the rise.[14] At a time when fewer may view religion as important in their lives and many leave organized religions for more personalized quests, it would be expected that some religious adherents experience doubts or disappointments and leave their faith community. Others may turn away from their commitment to or practice of communal values or activities. Disaffiliation from religious groups is an important subject of study among scholars of religion, especially in connection with smaller or newer religious groups.[15] Research findings indicate that some have interrupted their association with the Witness community for a period of time and then chosen to reaffiliate. An understudied topic, but one explored in this study, is the process and motivations involved for those who leave the religion and later return.

The decision to identify oneself with a religion includes, not only consideration of beliefs, but also a subjective assessment of what the religion offers in the way of support, how the religion might affect interpersonal relationships, and how others view the religion. Differences with family, friends, and others can be a potential source of increased tension; conversely, shared beliefs, a sense of belonging, and mutual support can have a bonding effect.[16]

One survey of Japanese attitudes toward religion found increased distrust toward religion, particularly non-Buddhist religions.[17] Discrimination against religious minorities can become ubiquitous, fueled, in part, by biased news sources, online misinformation, and hate speech. The effect of subjective conclusions drawn without reliable evidence disrupts family life across generations and threatens religious freedom.

Among the key findings reported in this section are the following: the growth of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan over time, the length of study preparation before baptism, perceived support within the religious community, changes in personal relationships, and experiences of discrimination because of their religious

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[11] Evidence of paternal influence is discussed in Lori Baker-Sperry, "Passing on the Faith: The Father's Role in Religious Transmission," *Sociological Focus* 34, no. 2 (2001): 185–98, https://doi.org/10.1080/00380237.2001.10571190.

[12] Sachiko Sugiyama, "Parental Influence upon Religious Orientation in a Japanese New Religious Group," *Tohoku Psychologica Folia* 49 (1990): 90–96.

[13] Arnaud Simard-Émond, "Understanding Conversion to Jehovism among Indigenous Peoples: The Case of the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg," *Social Compass* 70, no. 2 (2023): 283–303, https://doi.org/10.1177/00377686231182499.

[14] Pew Research Center, June 13, 2019, "The Age Gap around the World," https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2018/06/ReligiousCommitment-FULL-WEB.pdf; Yuji Ogihara, Yukiko Uchida, and Takashi Kusumi, "How Do Japanese Perceive Individualism? Examination of the Meaning of Individualism in Japan," *Psychologia* 57, no. 3 (2014): 213–23, https://doi.org/10.2117/psysoc.2014.213.

[15] Heinz Streib et al., *Deconversion Revisited: Biographical Studies and Psychometric Analyses Ten Years Later* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht / Brill Deutschland GmbH, 2022), https://doi.org/10.13109/9783666568688.

[16] Jude Mary Cénat et al., "The Transcultural Community Resilience Scale: Psychometric Properties and Multinational Validity in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021): Article 713477, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.713477; Saroglou et al., "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging."

[17] *Japan Data: Distrust in Religion Rises in Japan,* Nippon.com, April 18, 2023, survey based on data from Tsukiji Honganji, https://www.nippon.com/en/japan-data/h01645/.

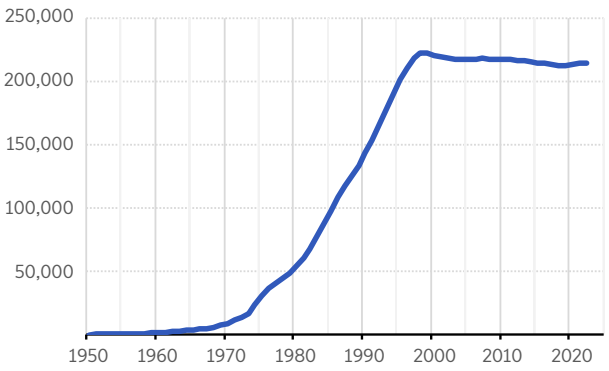
affiliation. Results show the various ways in which Jehovah's Witnesses navigate their multifaceted religious life.

Becoming Jehovah's Witnesses—Who, When, How, and Why

Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan are known for sharing their beliefs with others at their homes and on the streets. Yet, given the cultural and historical context, acceptance of their message in this non-Western, non-Christian context has not been a foregone conclusion. The following presents research findings on the pattern of growth, characteristics of the conversion process, and what attracts individuals to the religion.

Growth of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan.
To determine the growth of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan over time, official JW annual reports (see Figure 2.1) and JWJ-QS data (see Figure 2.2) were compared. The religious organization's annual reports provide the average number of publishers per year that could be used to determine the change in the total JW population in Japan over the past seven decades.[18] (See Figure 2.1.) Using the survey data from the JW sample population of 7,196 respondents, the cumulative sum of those who were baptized each year provided an approximation of growth over time. (See Figure 2.2.) The survey data do not include mortalities or those who were no longer affiliated. However, findings from the JW sample population show a similar pattern to that of the JW annual reports, with rapid growth during much of the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s. The survey data show that the number of baptisms continued to increase steadily after the 1990s. The JW annual reports, as observed in Figure 2.1, indicate that the number of those involved in the public ministry over the past two decades has remained fairly constant. A steady growth pattern of baptisms among Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan, as observed in Figure 2.2, occurred during the 20-year span from 2002 to 2022, when the national population growth rate in Japan fell slightly from 0.23% to -0.44%.[19]

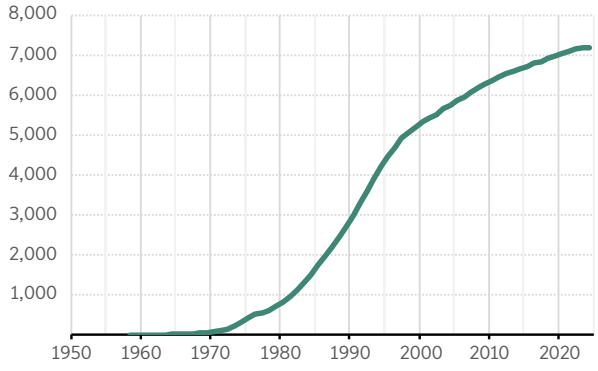
Figure 2.1. JW publishers in Japan, average number per year, 1950 to 2022



Source: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Annual reports, 1950–2023.

Note: "Publishers" refers to Jehovah's Witnesses who regularly participate in the public ministry.

Figure 2.2. JW sample population, cumulative sum of baptisms per year, 1958 to 2024



Note: From the JW sample population of 7,196 respondents, the cumulative sum of baptisms per year was calculated. Survey data do not include those who had died or were no longer affiliated.

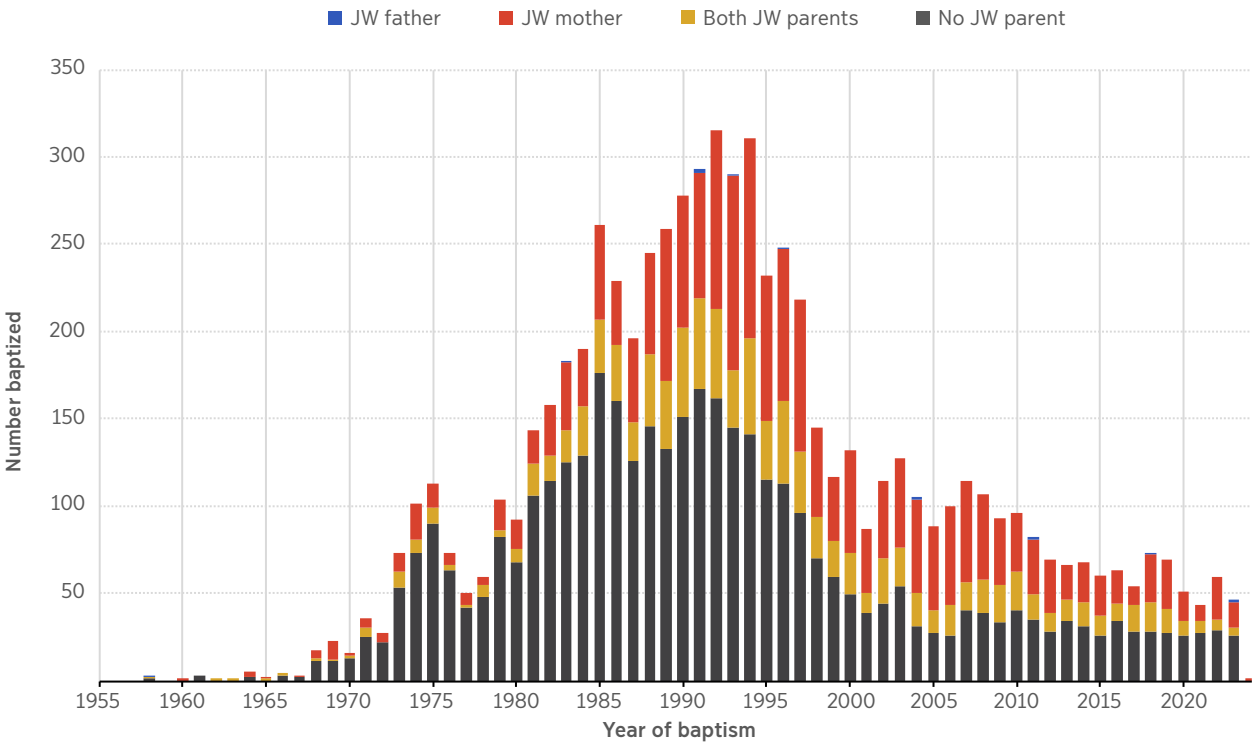
[18] Jehovah's Witnesses who regularly participate in the ministry by sharing their beliefs with others are counted as "publishers." The term refers to one who actively publishes, or preaches, the good news of God's Kingdom. The organization does not count "members," such as those who simply self-identify with the religion or attend Witnesses' religious services.

[19] "Japan Population Growth Rate" Macrotrends (website), https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/JPN/japan/population-growth-rate, accessed October 5, 2025.

Those with JW parents and non-JW parents. The survey asked, "Do you have a parent who is one of Jehovah's Witnesses?" If yes, respondents indicated whether their JW parent was their mother, father, or both. With these data, the JW sample population baptized each year was grouped by those with and without JW parents, as shown in Figure 2.3. Those baptized during the early decades of the religious group were less likely to have JW parents than those baptized in later years when the number of congregants with at least one JW parent increased. (Of the 7,196 respondents, 1.5% (*n* = 108) refrained from answering the two questions by choosing the "prefer not to answer" (PNA) option.)

Over half of the sample (53.5%; *n* = 3,847) had parents who were not Jehovah's Witnesses. Of the 45.9% (*n* = 3,303) with JW parents, 14.8% had both a JW mother and a JW father, and 30.1% had a JW mother with a non-JW father. Only 10 respondents (0.1%) had a JW father with a non-JW mother. The finding that so many of the respondents (44.9%) had a JW mother and that most of these were in religiously divided households likely highlights the influence JW mothers had on their children's religious choice.

Figure 2.3. Jehovah's Witnesses with and without JW parents, by year of baptism, 1955 to 2024



Note: *n* = 7,088 (which excludes PNA responses (*n* = 108)).

- Few JWs had JW parents during the early years of the religion in Japan.
- Over time, the number and proportion of those with JW parents increased.
- Almost half of JWs in Japan (44.9%) had JW mothers.

For those with JW parents (*n* = 3,303), the survey asked how old respondents were when at least one parent became one of Jehovah's Witnesses. The response options were infant (before birth to 11 months), young child (1 to 6 years), elementary school age (7 to 12 years), teenager (13 to 17 years), young adult (18 to 23 years), and aged 24 or older. As shown in Table 2.1, about half of these respondents had a JW parent during their early childhood—19.5% during infancy and 36.0% during young childhood. One-fourth (25.0%) reported that their parents became Jehovah's Witnesses during their elementary school years.

Although adolescence might be a more difficult developmental time to have a parent (mostly mothers) convert to a different religion, this was the situation for almost a tenth (8.5%) of the respondents who were then teenagers. Notably, 11.0% of respondents were adults (age 18 and over) when their parents became Jehovah's Witnesses. These figures suggest strong parental influence and possible two-way transmission or reinforcement of religious beliefs in parent-child relationships, a finding consistent with the previously cited scholarly literature on intergenerational religious transmission.[20]

Table 2.1. Age of JWs when a parent became one of Jehovah's Witnesses

Age range	Sample population with JW parents (*n* = 3,303)	
	n	Percent
Infant (before birth to 11 months)	642	19.5
Young child (1 to 6 years)	1,190	36.0
Elementary school age (7 to 12 years)	826	25.0
Teenager (13 to 17 years)	281	8.5
Adult (18 years and over)	364	11.0

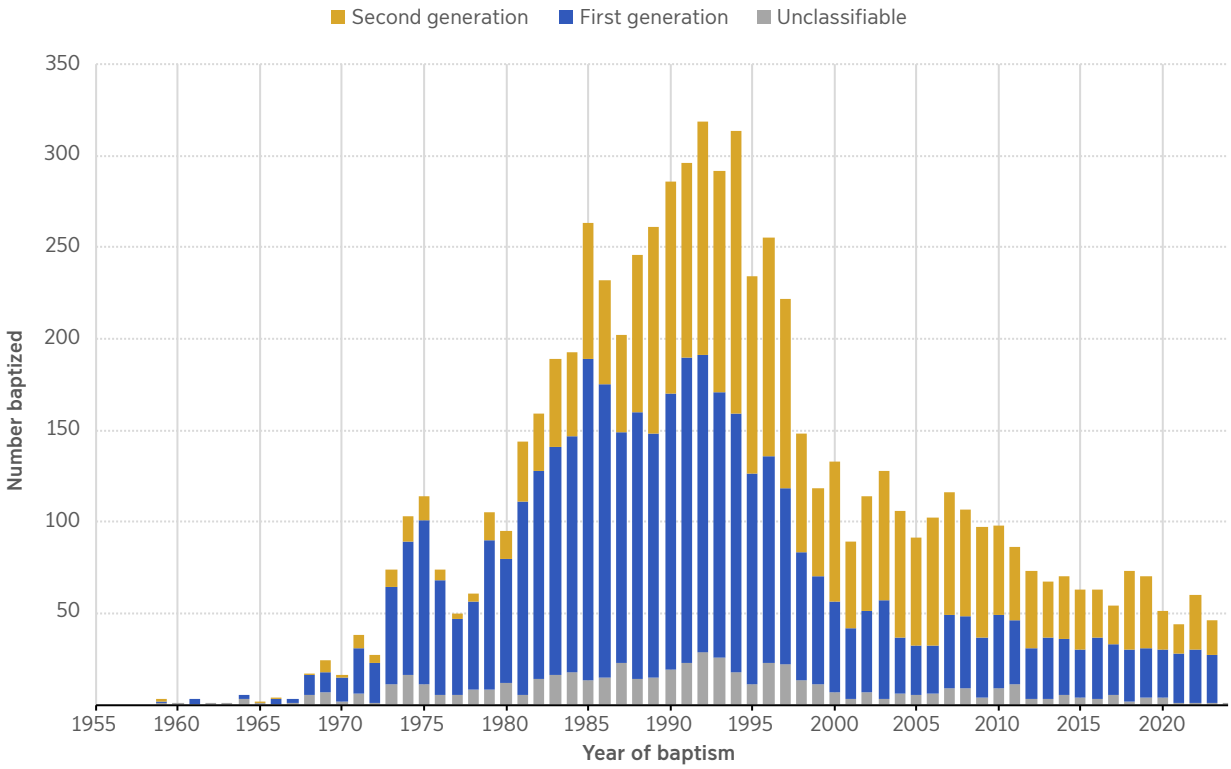
Note: The adult subgroup (18 years and over) includes both young adults aged 18 to 23 years (*n* = 147; 4.4%) and adults aged 24 years or older (*n* = 217; 6.6%).

[20] See footnotes 9 through 12.

Generations of Jehovah's Witnesses. The survey data allowed the categorization of first- and second-generation JWs by using the respondents' year of baptism and their age when their parent became one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Those who reported having no JW parent were considered first-generation JWs; those who reported having a JW parent and were baptized after a parent became one of Jehovah's Witnesses were considered second-generation JWs. About half of the sample population (53.5%; *n* = 3,847) were first-generation JWs. Over one-third of respondents (38.9%; *n* = 2,799) were second-generation JWs. Another 7.6% of respondents (*n* = 550) could not be classified into either category because they selected "prefer not to answer," or it was not clear whether they were baptized before or after their parents. Figure 2.4 shows the shift in the generational composition of Jehovah's Witnesses over time.

Figure 2.4. First- and second-generation Jehovah's Witnesses, 1955 to 2024



Note: First generation (*n* = 3,847; 53.5%), second generation (*n* = 2,799; 38.9%), unclassifiable (*n* = 550; 7.6%).

JW congregations are composed of both first-generation and second-generation JWs.

Table 2.2 shows notable generational differences. First-generation JWs were older (average current age, 66.9) and baptized at older ages (average age at baptism, 35.5). Second-generation JWs were younger (average current age, 43.3) and baptized at younger ages (average age at baptism, 17.9). Among first-generation JWs, 79.5% were female and 20.5% were male. In contrast, the proportion of females was 59.6% among second-generation JWs, while males almost doubled to 40.4%.

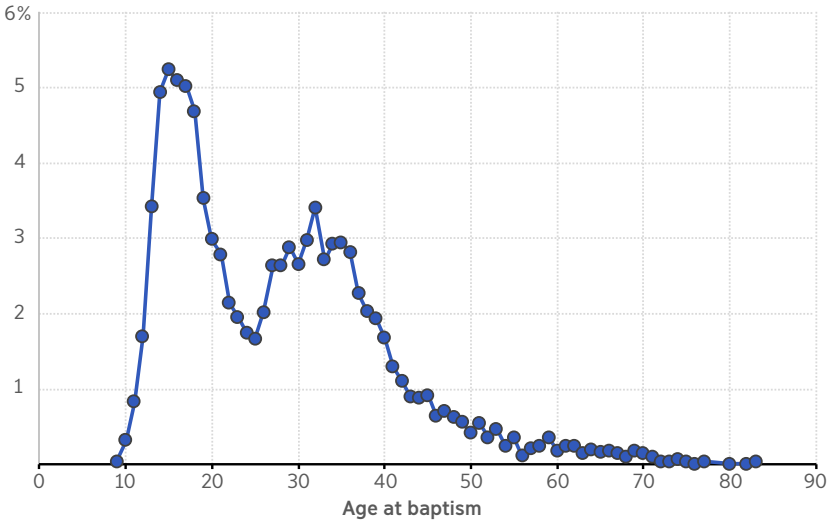
Table 2.2. First- and second-generation Jehovah's Witnesses by age

Generation	Total sample (n = 7,196)		Current age	Age at baptism
	n	Percent	Mean (years)	Mean (years)
First-generation JWs	3,847	53.5	66.9	35.5
Second-generation JWs	2,799	38.9	43.3	17.9
Unclassifiable	550	7.6	54.8	23.1

Note: Unclassifiable category includes those with PNA responses and those for whom it could not be determined if they were baptized before or after their parent.

Age at baptism. Findings showed a wide range of baptism ages among respondents, from age 9 to 83 years. Figure 2.5 plots the percentage of respondents who were baptized at each age. The average age at baptism for the total sample was 27.7 years; for males, 25.4; and for females, 28.6. Just over one-fourth of respondents (26.7%) became baptized Jehovah's Witnesses before age 18; 58.4% were baptized as young adults (aged 18 to 39); 12.6% as middle-aged adults (aged 40 to 59); and 2.3% as older adults (aged 60 or older). Of the 167 who were baptized in their later years, 11 were aged 75 years old or over. For Jehovah's Witnesses, chronological age does not determine when individuals are baptized.

Figure 2.5. Baptism age of Jehovah's Witnesses (percentage)



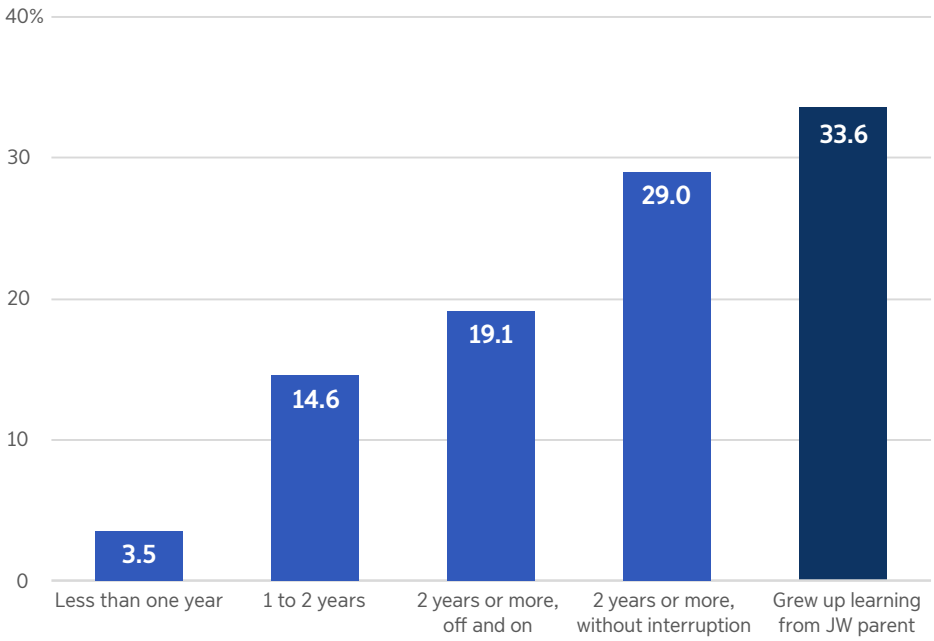
- Baptisms occur from youth to later life.
- Average age at baptism was 27.7 years.

Note: n = 7,196.

Period of study before baptism. The findings show that before individuals are baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses, they engage in the study of religious teachings for a considerable period of time. Figure 2.6 shows how long respondents studied prior to their baptism. One-third of respondents (33.6%) learned about the religion from a JW parent or guardian. Almost half (48.1%) studied for two or more years, either without interruption (29.0%) or intermittently (19.1%). A smaller percentage (14.6%) studied for one to two years. Only 251 respondents (3.5%) reported that they studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses for less than one year. The majority (81.4%) of the second-generation JWs grew up learning about the Bible from a JW parent.

Figure 2.6. Time spent in religious study before baptism

How long did you study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses before you were baptized?



Prior to their baptism, Jehovah's Witnesses study for a period of time.

Note: *n* = 7,196. PNAs (*n* = 14; 0.2%) are not shown in the chart.

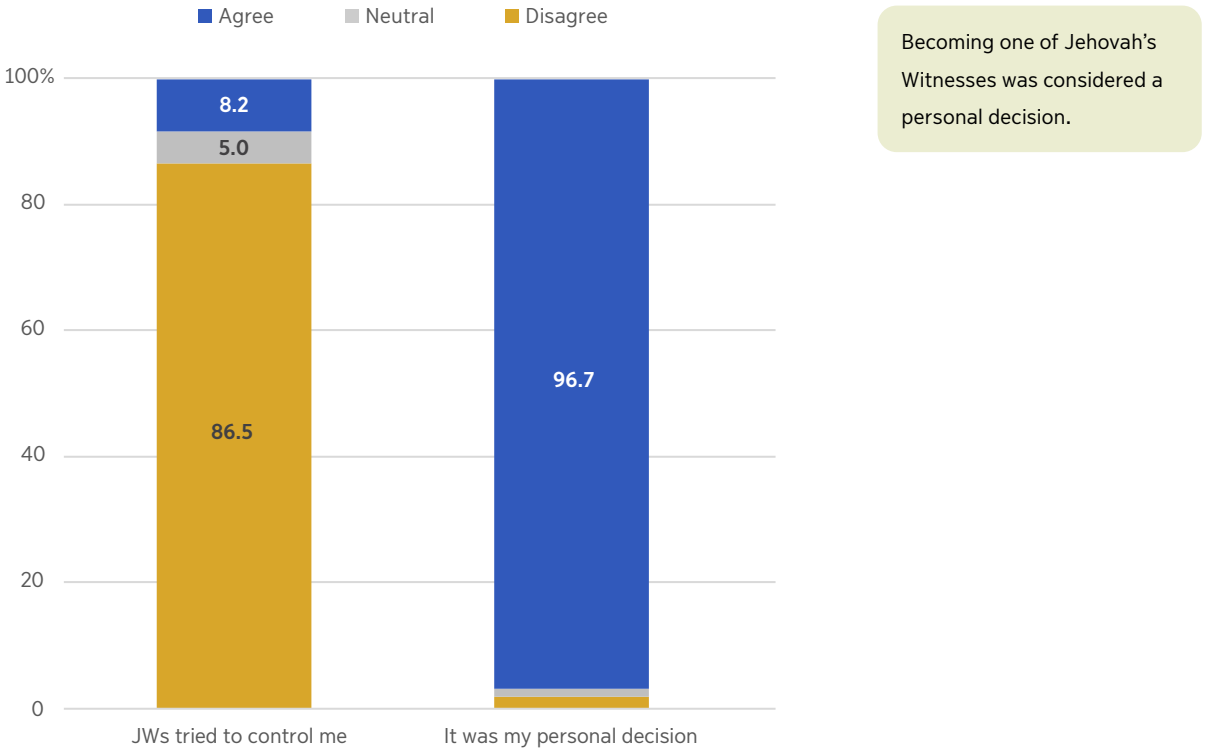
Perception of study with Jehovah's Witnesses. The survey investigated how respondents perceived their study with Jehovah's Witnesses, with their rating six statements on a five-point, strongly disagree-strongly agree scale with the additional option of "prefer not to answer." Two statements specifically inquired about perceptions of personal choice and/or efforts to control their decision:

- I felt that Jehovah's Witnesses were trying to control me.
- It was my personal decision to become a Jehovah's Witness.

Figure 2.7 shows that the vast majority (96.7%, combining "strongly agree" and "agree" responses) indicated that their becoming Jehovah's Witnesses was a personal decision, with only 1.8% disagreeing (combining "strongly disagree" and "disagree" responses). Similarly, 86.5% indicated that they did not feel Jehovah's Witnesses tried to control them while studying the Bible. However, even for the relatively small percentage (8.2%) who felt JWs tried to control their decision, most of these indicated having a high degree of agency during the course of their Bible studies.

Figure 2.7. Perception of choice or control when studying with Jehovah's Witnesses

Concerning the situation when you were studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses



Note: *n* = 7,196. PNAs are not included in the chart. The "agree" percentage includes both "strongly agree" and "agree" responses, while the "disagree" percentage includes both "strongly disagree" and "disagree" responses.

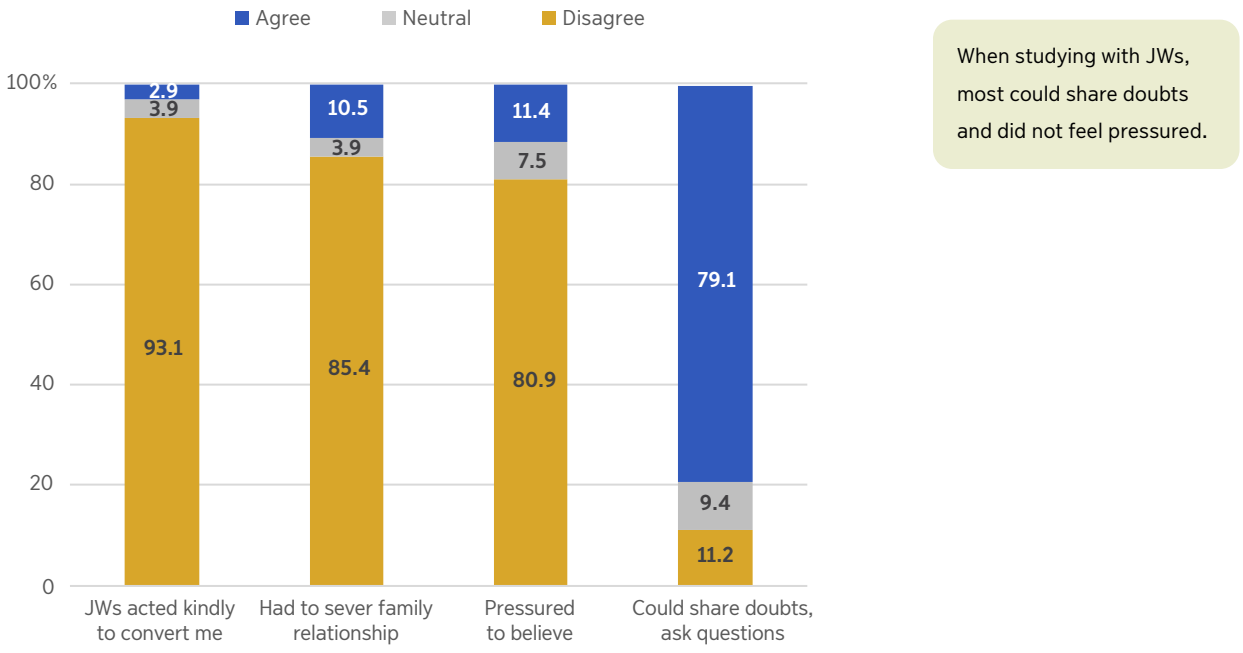
To better understand how respondents perceived their situation when they were studying, the survey included the following strongly disagree-strongly agree statements:

- I felt Jehovah's Witnesses acted kindly mainly to convert me.
- I had to sever my relationship with my family to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses.
- I felt pressured to believe what Jehovah's Witnesses teach.
- I could share my doubts and ask questions.

As shown in Figure 2.8, respondents disagreed that they were pressured (80.9%) or that JWs' acts of kindness were mainly with the intent to convert them (93.1%). Although changing one's religion can sometimes be a source of conflict for family members, most (85.4%) indicated that their studying with Jehovah's Witnesses did not result in severing family relationships. Three-fourths (79.1%) agreed that they could share doubts and ask questions when studying.

> *I find the current congregation to be open-minded, vibrant, and exceptionally welcoming. I really like that. . . . In the past, there was a certain strictness and seriousness or earnestness stemming from Japanese culture, which reflects both positive and negative aspects. I also sensed a disconnect from Jehovah's Witnesses in other countries.*
>
> —Male, 50s, first-generation JW

Figure 2.8. Perception of situation when studying with Jehovah's Witnesses



Note: *n* = 7,196. PNAs are not shown in the chart. The "agree" percentage includes both "strongly agree" and "agree" responses, while the "disagree" percentage includes both "strongly disagree" and "disagree" responses.

A comparison of responses for first- and second-generation JWs found similar patterns. Most among the first generation (88.7%) and second generation (83.0%) disagreed that JWs tried to control them during their Bible study, while only less than one-tenth of both groups felt controlled (7.3% and 9.6%, respectively). Both groups agreed that it was their personal decision to become Jehovah's Witnesses (97.3% and 96.2%, respectively). Negligible differences were found between first- and second-generation JWs in the percentages of those who reported that they could share their doubts (79.2% and 78.3%) and that JWs acted kindly to convert them (3.1% and 2.5%).

> *During my student years, there was a period when I voluntarily chose to stop studying the Bible and attending the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses. Even so, my mother never forced me to engage in Witness activities. Rather, she respected my decision and continued to raise me with loving affection.*
>
> —Male, 40s, second-generation JW

Original and current attractions to Jehovah's Witnesses. To understand the original and current attractions to the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses, respondents were asked two related questions with the same list of response options for each question.[21] The questions were as follows:

- Individuals are attracted to a religion for different reasons. What originally attracted you to Jehovah's Witnesses?
- Individuals decide to remain in a religion for different reasons. What attracts you now to Jehovah's Witnesses?

For both questions, respondents could select up to 3 of 11 items related to the following: "attracted to the moral guidelines," "logic of the teachings," "to learn more about the Bible," "to make better life choices," "family members who were [are] Jehovah's Witnesses," "Jehovah's Witnesses' good-hearted qualities," "to be closer to God," "hope for the future," concern that "family and friends would reject me if I did not become [remain] one of Jehovah's Witnesses," "help with my family relationships," and "religious rituals," with the additional options of "none of the above" and "prefer not to answer."

What attracted Jehovah's Witnesses to their religion varied and changed somewhat from their original to current attractions. Figure 2.9 shows the percentages of respondents who selected each item as one of their top three original and current attractions to the religion. (For comparative purposes, those who chose "none of the above" or "prefer not to answer" in either question (n = 188) were not retained in these results.)

"Logic of the teachings" was one of the top three responses for both original attraction (37.8%) and current attraction (43.1%). Two items had the largest shift in percentages from original to current attraction. "Had family members who were Jehovah's Witnesses" was an original attraction for over one-third (37.0%), but less than one-tenth (9.3%) selected this as a reason they remain in the religion. In contrast, "to be closer to God" was chosen by less than one-fifth (17.3%) as an original attraction but by two-thirds (66.5%) as a current attraction.

The item about "JWs' good-hearted qualities" was selected by 39.9% as an original attraction and 23.2% as a current attraction. "Hope for the future" was selected as an original attraction by 27.5% and as a current attraction by 40.5% of respondents.

Other items selected by at least one-fourth of respondents for original and current attractions were, respectively, "make better life choices" (33.3% and 36.4%), "attracted to the moral guidelines" (24.4% and 35.3%), and "to learn more about the Bible" (27.4% and 31.5%).

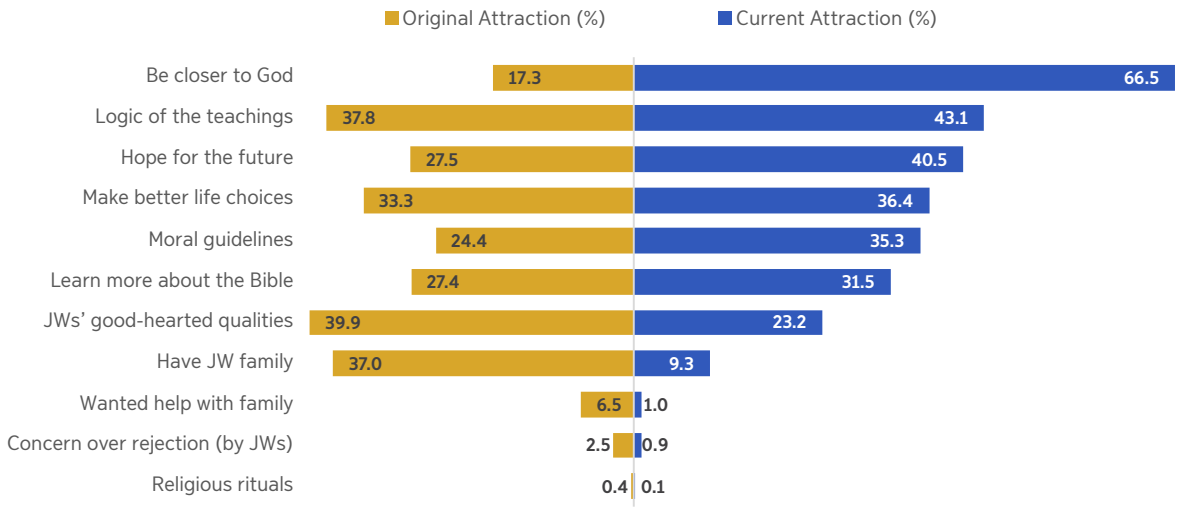
[21] The list of items in the attraction measure was adapted from those used in separate studies of Jehovah's Witnesses in Kazakhstan and Rwanda: Aldiyar Auyezbek and Serik Beissembayev, *Views, Values and Beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Republic of Kazakhstan: Analytical Report on the Results of the Study* (Astana, Kazakhstan, 2023), http://paperlab.kz/research and https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pKWfXzR2nA06iOF_HXOGLIQnLY8PfDf3/view; Valens Nkurikiyinka and Jolene Chu, *Jehovah's Witnesses during and after the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda: Psychosocial Factors Related to Faith, Forgiveness, and Family* (Kigali, Rwanda: Organisation Religieuse des Témoins de Jéhovah, 2025).

Notably, less than 0.5% chose "religious rituals" as either an original or current attraction. Two options asked if respondents were concerned about rejection by family and friends if they did not become (or remain) a Witness. Although not stated, the options intended to imply that these family or friends were themselves Jehovah's Witnesses. These options were selected by 2.5% of respondents as an original motivation and less than 1.0% as a main reason for their remaining in the religion.

> *During my student years, I noticed the distinct attitude, behavior, and refreshing atmosphere among Jehovah's Witnesses at my school. This experience inspired me to begin studying the Bible. These second-generation Witness children stood out from other students, which I found both appealing and admirable. As a result, I requested a Bible study, hoping to become more like them.*
>
> —Female, 30s, first-generation JW

Figure 2.9. Original and current attractions to Jehovah's Witnesses

What *originally* attracted you to Jehovah's Witnesses?
What attracts you *now* to Jehovah's Witnesses?



Note: *n* = 7,008. Data analysis compared original and current attractions for the same respondents.

Top three attractions

Original:	Current:
1. JWs' good-hearted qualities	1. To be closer to God
2. Logic of the teachings	2. Logic of the teachings
3. Have JW family	3. Hope for the future

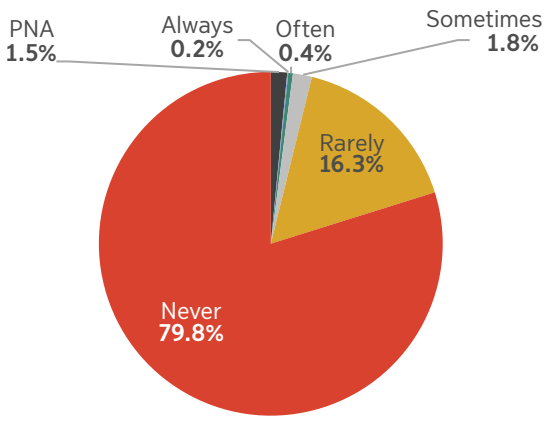
Ever Stop or Regret Being One of Jehovah's Witnesses

Research findings show a high degree of stability and commitment among Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan, with most congregants remaining in the organization without interruption. Of the total sample, most (95.8%) never stopped their religious association after becoming baptized Jehovah's Witnesses. A small number of respondents (n = 268; 3.7%) reported that they had previously stopped their association but later returned.[22] Of those who had stopped and returned, 76.1% (n = 204) were female and 23.9% (n = 64) were male. For the total sample population (which was disproportionately female), 4.0% of all female respondents and 3.1% of all male respondents had stopped their association with Jehovah's Witnesses for a time.

A consistent pattern was found in responses to the survey question that asked if respondents ever regretted being Jehovah's Witnesses, with a similar percentage (96.1%) reporting that they either "never" (79.8%) or "rarely" (16.3%) had regrets about being Jehovah's Witnesses. (See Figure 2.10.) Only 40 respondents (0.6%) indicated that they "often" or "always" had regrets, and another 129 (1.8%) selected "sometimes."

Figure 2.10. Regret over religious affiliation

Do you ever regret being one of Jehovah's Witnesses?



The vast majority of JWs in Japan (96.1%) have never or rarely regretted being JWs.

Note: n = 7,196.

[22] Individuals may stop their religious association by becoming inactive (no longer participating in congregation ministry activities or attending meetings). There are no congregation sanctions for inactivity. Baptized congregants who commit serious unrepentant wrongdoing (such as sexual misconduct, violence, or substance abuse) may be subject to removal from the congregation if they refuse to reform despite efforts by congregation elders to provide spiritual assistance. Removal results in curtailed spiritual and social interactions with other congregants (except within the immediate household, where family relationships and responsibilities remain). Individuals may still attend congregation meetings and request pastoral help; and reinstatement to the congregation is possible upon acknowledgment, repentance, and cessation of the wrong. For a full discussion, see the series of four articles for congregation study in the August 2024 issue of *The Watchtower* (https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-august-2024/).

Leaving and Returning—Who Leave and Why They Return

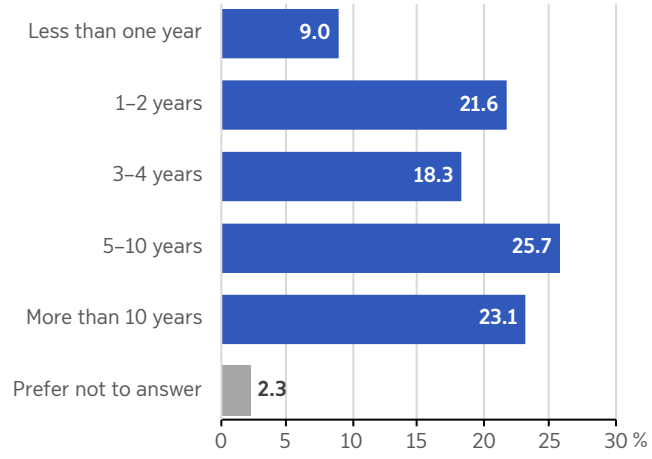
The study examined the proportion of those who, after their baptism, remained Jehovah's Witnesses without interruption, and those who left for a time and then resumed their association with the religious community. The 268 respondents who indicated that they had stopped association with Jehovah's Witnesses (3.7% of the total sample) were asked how long the interruption lasted and what factors, if any, moved them to return to the religion. Of this subgroup, 97 were first-generation JWs, 150 were second-generation JWs, and 21 respondents could not be classified.

Time away. The survey asked those who had previously stopped associating with Jehovah's Witnesses how long had they stopped. Response options were as follows: less than 1 year; 1 to 2; 3 to 4; 5 to 6; 7 to 8; 9 to 10; and more than 10 years. As shown in Figure 2.11, almost one-third (30.6%) resumed their association with the religious community within 2 years of leaving. Almost half (48.9%) resumed their association within 4 years of having stopped. For some, resuming association with Jehovah's Witnesses occurred after a longer time—one-fourth (25.7%) resumed association within 5 to 10 years and almost one-fourth (23.1%) after more than 10 years of interruption. A comparison of first- and second-generation JWs who had stopped association found that 55.3% of second-generation JWs resumed association within four years, compared with 38.1% of first-generation JWs.

Since childhood, I resented the strict and constraining nature of the organization, so I left when I turned 20, believing I had finally found freedom. However, I still held the belief that the Bible has true and accurate principles. After many twists and turns, I eventually decided to return to the organization, despite having believed I would never do so. Now, my life is filled with genuine happiness, and I experience a deep sense of joy from drawing closer to Jehovah.

—Female, 40s, second-generation JW

Figure 2.11. Time away from association with Jehovah's Witnesses



- Almost one-third of those who leave resumed association within 2 years.
- Almost half resumed association in less than 5 years.

Note: Findings are based on the subgroup of respondents who had stopped being Jehovah's Witnesses for a time (*n* = 268).

Year when resumed JW association. The survey asked those who had left for a time: "To the best of your recollection, in what year did you resume activity as one of Jehovah's Witnesses?" Of the 268 who had previously stopped associating with Jehovah's Witnesses, 239 reported the year they returned. As shown in Table 2.3, three-fourths returned after the year 2000. The year 2018 had the most (n = 16) resuming their association with Jehovah's Witnesses. Most who had previously stopped and later resumed their association have since remained as Jehovah's Witnesses for years, even decades.

Table 2.3. Time periods when resuming association

Time period	*n*	Percent of total who left (n = 239)
In or before 1980	5	2.1
1981 to 1990	20	8.4
1991 to 2000	35	14.6
2001 to 2010	82	34.3
2011 to 2020	72	30.1
2021 to 2024	25	10.5

Note: The number for the year 2024 is incomplete; one respondent indicated having resumed association in 2024, prior to the close of the survey period on January 14, 2024.

Age when resuming association. To determine the ages when the 239 respondents in this subgroup resumed their JW association, their reported year of return was subtracted from the year of birth for each respondent. The ages of return ranged from 16 to 79. The average age when respondents returned was 36.5 (standard deviation, SD = 13.06). The average age of return for first-generation JWs who had left was 47.3 (SD = 13.94) compared with 30.8 (SD = 8.38) for second-generation JWs. Table 2.4 shows that over three-fourths resumed their association by age 45, but about 20% resumed association later in life.

Table 2.4. Age when resuming association

Age	*n*	Percent of total who left (n = 239)
25 and under	53	22.2
26–35	80	33.5
36–45	55	23.0
46–55	25	10.5
Over 55	26	10.9

After spending nearly 15 years away from the organization, beginning in my 20s, I was able to return thanks to Jehovah's love and mercy. I once blamed my parents' strict upbringing policy for everything, but now I feel deeply grateful to them for their unwavering dedication in raising me.

—Female, 50s, second-generation JW

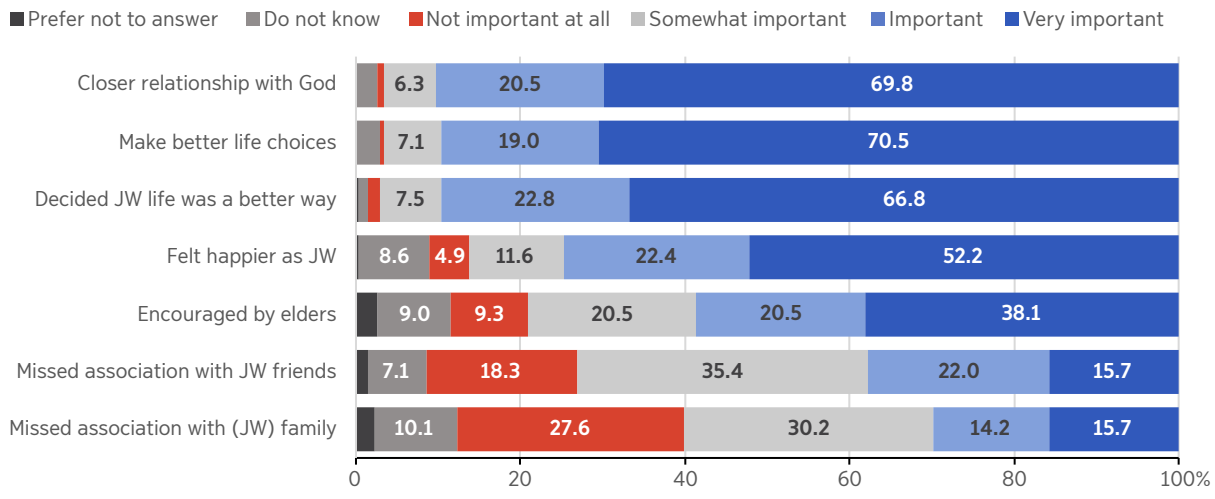
Motivations to return. Respondents who had stopped associating with Jehovah's Witnesses for a period of time were asked, on a four-point scale, how important or not important certain motivations were for them to resume their association. As shown in Figure 2.12, no single motivation stood out in the list of seven. Approximately 90% identified the following as important or very important motivations for them:

- Wanting a closer relationship with God (90.3%)
- Wanting to make better life choices (89.5%)
- Deciding that the Witness life was a better way (89.6%)

For first- and second-generation JWs, the top three motivations were the same as above, but the item with the largest percentage selected by second-generation JWs was "to make better life choices" (91.3%). Of the total who resumed their association, 74.6% rated as important or very important that they felt happier as JWs, and 58.6% were encouraged by congregation elders. Depending on their circumstances, individuals might have had limited social interaction with JW friends and family during the time that they stopped being active in the congregation. Relatively smaller percentages indicated that missing their association with JW friends (37.7%) or with (JW) family (29.9%) was an important motivation for them to resume association. This was true for both first- and second-generation JWs.

Figure 2.12. Motivations to resume association with Jehovah's Witnesses

How important were the following as motivations for you to resume association with Jehovah's Witnesses?



Note: *n* = 268.

Most important motivations to return:

- Have a closer relationship with God
- Make better life choices
- Decided JW life was a better way

Least important:

- Missed association with JW friends or family

I am more determined than ever to strengthen and deepen my relationship with Jehovah.

—Female, 40s, left and returned

Perceived Support, Relationship Changes, and Discrimination

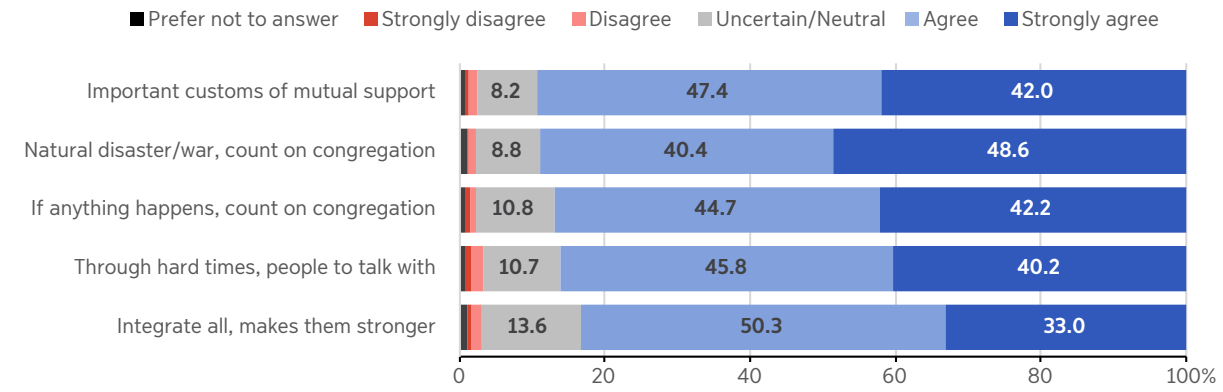
The study investigated certain benefits and costs associated with being Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan: respondents' perception of congregation support, changes in relationships, and experiences of discrimination.

Congregation support. Religious groups can foster a sense of social connectedness and provide a network of support in times of need. The study examined the extent to which Jehovah's Witnesses view their religious community as a source of support. The survey included five items selected from a measure of community support and resilience with a five-point strongly disagree-strongly agree scale with the option of "prefer not to answer."[23] The selected items related to how respondents viewed their congregation in the following areas: a) mutual support, b) integration and strengthening of congregants, c) dependability, d) having people to talk to during hard times, and e) trustworthiness in the event of a natural disaster, war, or other extreme situation.

Figure 2.13 shows the responses from the total sample for each item in the measure. All items had a consistent pattern of agreement, with over 80% indicating that they agreed or strongly agreed with each statement. The statements with the highest agreement were related to mutual support in the congregation (89.4%) and trustworthiness in the event of an extreme situation such as natural disasters (89.0%). Some responses may have been influenced by the coincidental occurrence of a magnitude 7.6 earthquake that struck the Noto Peninsula in the Ishikawa Prefecture on January 1, 2024, just before the survey period was set to begin.[24]

Figure 2.13. View of congregation support

When you think about those in your congregation, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following?



Note: *n* = 7,196.

Jehovah's Witnesses viewed their congregations as a source of support.

[23] Cénat et al., "The Transcultural Community Resilience Scale."

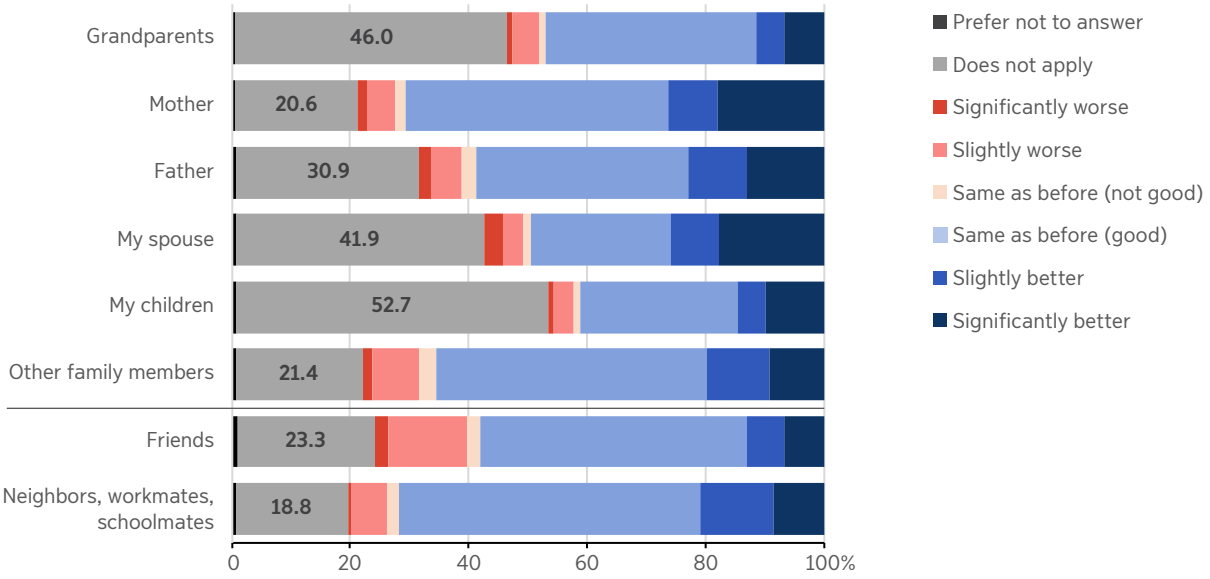
[24] To support disaster relief efforts, Jehovah's Witnesses provided aid and organized volunteers from across Japan ("Strong Earthquake Shakes Noto Peninsula in Japan," January 4, 2024, Jehovah's Witnesses—Official Website, https://www.jw.org/en/news/region/japan/Strong-Earthquake-Shakes-Noto-Peninsula-in-Japan/). Cf. reports on disaster relief after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, "The 2011 Japan Tsunami—Survivors Tell Their Stories," *Awake!* (December 2011): 14–20; *2012 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 2012) 18–23, https://www.jw.org/en/library/books/2012-Yearbook-of-Jehovahs-Witnesses/Highlights-of-the-Past-Year/.

Perceived changes in relationships. The survey asked respondents how they would rate their current relationships compared to the time before becoming Jehovah's Witnesses. A six-point scale was used ("significantly worse," "slightly worse," "same as before-not good," "same as before-good," "slightly better," and "significantly better"), with the additional options of "prefer not to answer" and "does not apply" (DNA). Although this cross-sectional survey research cannot attribute any changes in relationships to the effects of religion, the measure does provide insight into respondents' perceived changes in relationships after their becoming Jehovah's Witnesses.

DNA responses ranged from 18.8% to 52.7%. Since respondents could choose the PNA option for sensitive questions they did not want to answer, the DNA responses likely indicated those who did not have a particular relationship (e.g., no spouse or children) or the person may have died (e.g., a deceased parent or grandparent). Others could have chosen the DNA option because they had always been part of the JW community and therefore had no basis for a before-and-after comparison of their individual relationships. Despite uncertainty about DNA responses, the data provide insight into the types and perceptions of relationships of Jehovah's Witnesses. Figure 2.14 shows the results for all response options, including DNA.

Figure 2.14. Perceived changes in relationships after becoming JWs (with DNA responses)

In your opinion, compared to the time before you became one of Jehovah's Witnesses, how would you rate your current relationships with the following?



Note: Based on responses from the total sample, *n* = 7,196.

The change in relationships that respondents rated varied based on relationship's type, with high percentages of DNA for some, such as grandparents and children.

Perceived relationship changes after becoming Jehovah's Witnesses are better understood by removing DNA responses from the analysis. As shown in Figure 2.15, across all relationships, most respondents indicated that their relationships with others were good both before and after becoming Jehovah's Witnesses. Positive perceptions of relationships could reflect the quality and stability of both the respondents and those in their social circle.

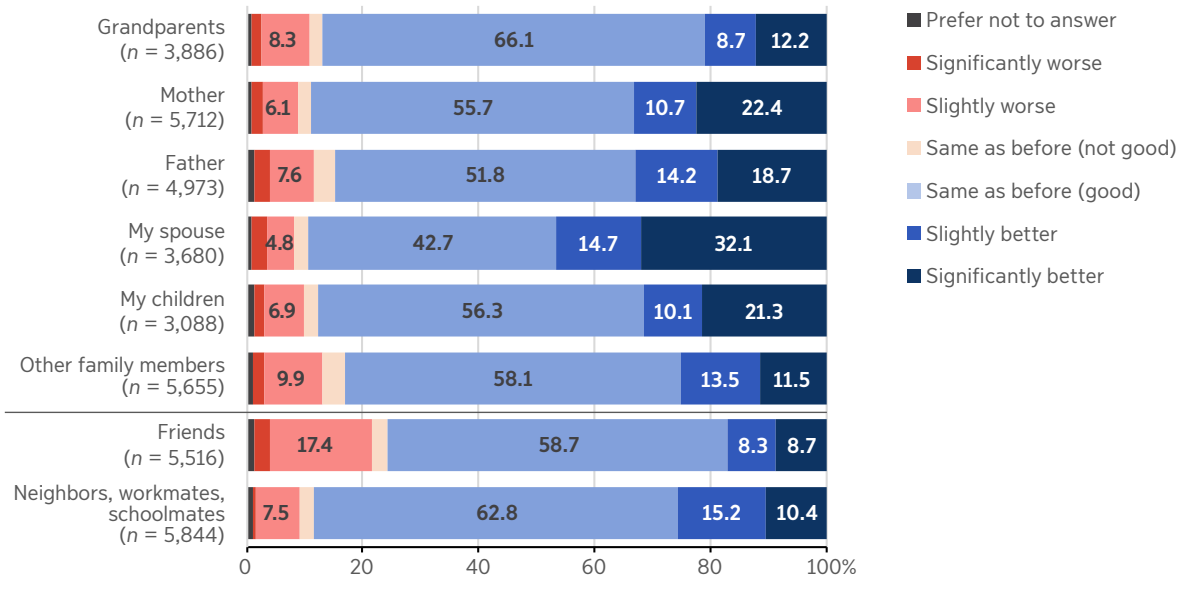
Spousal relationships showed the greatest improvement since becoming Jehovah's Witnesses. Of the 3,680 respondents who reported being currently married, 42.7% indicated that the relationship with their spouse was good both before and after becoming Jehovah's Witnesses. Another 46.8% reported slightly or significantly better relationships with spouses after they became Jehovah's Witnesses.

At a time of intergenerational tension in Japan, respondents reported good intergenerational relationships with grandparents, parents, and children. Of the 3,088 respondents who reported having children (including minor and adult children), over half (56.3%) indicated the relationship with their children was good both before and after becoming Jehovah's Witnesses; another third (31.4%) reported better relationships with their children. Relationships with grandparents were among the strongest. Of the 3,886 respondents reporting relationships with their grandparents, two-thirds (66.1%) indicated their relationships were good both before and after their becoming Jehovah's Witnesses; another one-fifth (20.9%) reported better relationships after becoming Jehovah's Witnesses.

Overall, respondents viewed their relationships favorably with proximate others, which could include those who are not Jehovah's Witnesses. Of the 5,844 reporting perceptions of their relationships with neighbors, workmates, and schoolmates, 62.8% perceived these relationships to be good both before and after becoming Jehovah's Witnesses, and an additional 25.6% reported that these relationships were better after conversion. Of the 5,516 respondents reporting on relationships with friends, 58.7% indicated these were good both before and after their becoming Jehovah's Witnesses, and 17.0% indicated that friendships became better. Although it might be assumed that differences in beliefs and behaviors could strain friendships, about one-fifth (20.3%) indicated worsened relationships with friends.

Figure 2.15. Perceived changes in relationships after becoming JWs

In your opinion, compared to the time before you became one of Jehovah's Witnesses, how would you rate your current relationships with the following?



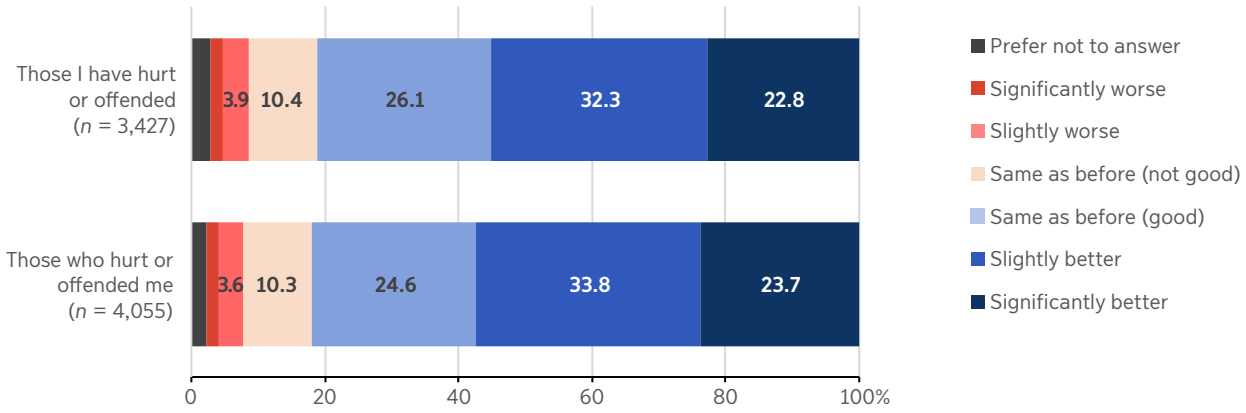
Most reported good or improved relationships with relatives and nonrelatives.

Respondents also gave their perceptions of conflict relationships since becoming Jehovah's Witnesses—relationships with those they had hurt or offended and relationships with those who had hurt or offended them. Approximately half of the respondents indicated that having conflict relationships did not apply to them—43.6% selected DNA for relationships with those who had hurt or offended them, and 52.4% selected DNA for relationships with those they had hurt or offended.

Figure 2.16 shows the responses of those who reported on their conflict relationships and how they perceived changes in these relationships. Over half reported slightly or significantly better relationships with those whom they had hurt (55.1%) and who had hurt them (57.5%).

Figure 2.16. Perception of conflict relationships

In your opinion, compared to the time before you became one of Jehovah's Witnesses, how would you rate your current relationships with the following?



Note: "Does not apply" responses were removed.

Over half reported better relationships with those they had hurt or who had hurt them.

As shown in Table 2.5, the majority of first- and second-generation JWs reported having good relationships with close family members both before and after becoming Jehovah's Witnesses, or that relationships became better. The total percentage of those who reported good or improved relationships for all types of relationships was more for those who grew up with JW parents (second-generation JWs) than for first-generation JWs. The same pattern was true of conflict relationships. The majority of both JW generations thought that since becoming Jehovah's Witnesses, previous conflict relationships were good or better.

Table 2.5. Perceived relationships: First- and second-generation JWs

Type of relationship	First-generation JWs (*n* = 3,847)			
	Same – good	Slightly better	Much better	Total
Interpersonal				
My grandparents (*n* = 1,555)	55.5%	9.8%	15.9%	81.2%
My mother (*n* = 2,801)	48.1	12.8	20.4	81.3
My father (*n* = 2,263)	49.5	13.7	17.0	80.2
My children (minor or adult) (*n* = 2,553)	54.4	11.0	21.4	86.8
My spouse (*n* = 2,526)	34.5	18.0	34.0	86.5
Conflict				
Those I have hurt or offended (*n* = 1,763)	24.5	31.9	20.3	76.7
Those who hurt or offended me (*n* = 2,127)	23.9	33.0	22.0	78.9
Type of relationship	**Second-generation JWs** (*n* = 2,799)			
	Same – good	Slightly better	Much better	Total
Interpersonal				
My grandparents (*n* = 2,007)	74.7%	7.6%	8.6%	90.9%
My mother (*n* = 2,428)	65.6	8.6	22.1	96.3
My father (*n* = 2,310)	55.6	14.5	18.6	88.7
My children (minor or adult) (*n* = 372)	68.3	5.9	21.2	95.4
My spouse (*n* = 928)	64.3	6.9	26.0	97.2
Conflict				
Those I have hurt or offended (*n* = 1,392)	28.5	33.1	25.1	86.7
Those who hurt or offended me (*n* = 1,603)	26.0	35.4	25.2	86.6

Note: The total percentages for each generation are for those who reported that their relationships were good or improved after becoming Jehovah's Witnesses. The *n* for each type of relationship reported varied per respondent.

There will never be a congregation without challenges. But much like in a family, misunderstandings are naturally expected. By fostering open communication, giving and receiving forgiveness, we can be more united.

—Female, 30s, second-generation JW

Experiences of discrimination from media, social media, and other forms. The survey questionnaire listed types of discrimination and asked if respondents had experienced any of these in the past 12 months. Respondents could select all that applied. Figure 2.17 shows the percentage of the total sample that selected each item. In the list of discrimination experiences, those related to media reports were the most prevalent. The vast majority of Jehovah's Witnesses in the sample population (94.8%; *n* = 6,168) indicated that they had seen media coverage that they believed misrepresented the religious group. Another 33.9% (*n* = 2,207) reported that someone outside the religious community had expressed sympathy toward them because of negative media coverage. The findings indicate that Jehovah's Witnesses and others view media coverage about the religious community as inaccurate. The findings also suggest possible adverse effects of social media. Some (9.4%; *n* = 610) reported that non-Witness family or friends pressured them after they saw social media posts about Jehovah's Witnesses. Others reported that someone had insulted them (8.9%; *n* = 578) or treated them with suspicion (8.5%; *n* = 555) because they were Jehovah's Witnesses. A few experienced other forms of discrimination: being excluded (2.1%; *n* = 134), treated unfairly (1.9%; *n* = 122), denied employment (1.0%; *n* = 63), physically attacked or threatened (0.8%; *n* = 54), and having a teacher intervene to protect their child from an alleged verbal or physical attack (0.4%; *n* = 24).

The media consistently reports negative news and topics related to Jehovah's Witnesses. I am totally unhappy with the current situation, where the voices of the second generation of Jehovah's Witnesses who are content with their faith are rarely, if ever, highlighted.

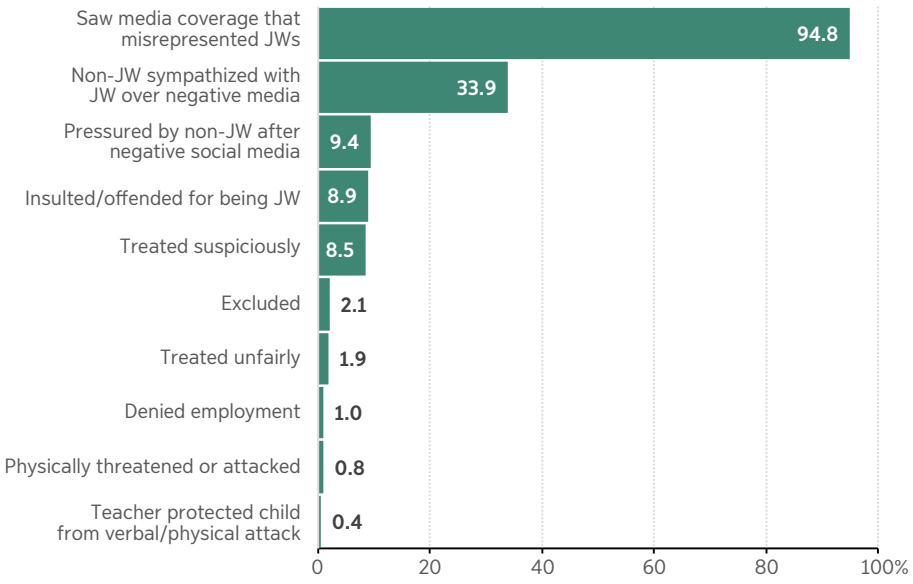
—Female, 20s, second-generation JW

While it was my personal decision to value and treasure the Bible and what it teaches, the way others view us, including the insults and criticism from those who are not Witnesses, deeply hurts me.

—Female, 20s, second-generation JW

Figure 2.17. Experiences of discrimination of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan

In the past 12 months, have you experienced any of the following?



JWs (94.8%) have seen media coverage they believe misrepresents their religion.

Note: *n* = 6,505. PNA and/or DNA responses (*n* = 691) were removed.

Conclusion

During the early years of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan, from the 1950s to the late 1980s, the largest number of JW converts came from non-JW households. Over time, more of the newly baptized were second-generation JWs. Today, congregations are composed of first-generation and second-generation JWs, with the potential for an increased number of third-generation JWs.

The age when Jehovah's Witnesses were baptized ranged from youth to later life, with an average age of 28. The decision to be baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses occurred after a considerable period of time spent studying the faith's beliefs and practices. One-third of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan learned about the religion from their JW parents. For those who studied with someone other than their parents, almost half studied for two or more years prior to their baptism. The majority perceived a high degree of personal choice in their decision to identify themselves as being associated with the religious group.

Most Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan were attracted to the religion because of what they deemed to be the logic of the teachings—it was both what motivated them to begin and to continue their association with Jehovah's Witnesses.

The influence of family on individuals' religious decisions was mixed. About half who converted to the religion did not have JW parents. For others, having JW family connections influenced their original attraction to the religion, but having JW family was not the reason persons felt motivated to continue in the religion. Neither affirmation nor disapproval from family was seen as a motivator to stay in (or leave) the religion. Less than one percent indicated that concern over rejection from JW friends or (JW) family was a main reason for their remaining in the religion. Witnesses said they were attracted to the religion to make better life choices, have moral guidelines, and have a hope for the future. However, the number one reason Jehovah's Witnesses gave for remaining in the religion was "to be closer to God."

After baptism, the overwhelming majority remained in the religion without interruption and without regrets. A small percentage of the sample population (3.7%) left the religion and later resumed their association. About half of those who left and later returned to the congregation did so within four years. Close to one-fourth resumed association more than ten years after they had stopped association. The leading reason this small group gave for resuming association after an interruption was wanting "a closer relationship with God" (similar to what currently attracts individuals in the religion). Those who left also said they were motivated to resume association to "make better life choices" and because they decided that the life of Jehovah's Witnesses was "a better way."

The findings reveal Jehovah's Witnesses' positive perception of the religion's effect on their lives. They viewed congregations as a source of social and instrumental support. Overall, most Jehovah's Witnesses reported having good interpersonal relationships with no change since becoming Witnesses. Others reported better relationships with family and nonfamily after becoming Jehovah's Witnesses. Although improved relationships might not be attributed solely to the religion, the research shows that Witnesses experienced their religion as having a positive, rather than detrimental, effect on interpersonal relationships in the family and with the larger community. The percentage of those who grew up with JW parents (second-generation JWs) who reported similar positive relationships since becoming Jehovah's Witnesses was higher than those of the first generation who grew up with no JW parents.

A disadvantage associated with being Jehovah's Witnesses was the experience of discrimination, particularly from negative media portrayals of the religious community. Most Jehovah's Witnesses saw media coverage that they believed misrepresents their faith community. Some reported that those outside the religion reacted to the negative media reports and social media content by either expressing sympathy or reinforcing pressure against religious adherents. Other forms of discrimination that Jehovah's Witnesses

experience (e.g., being insulted, treated suspiciously, denied employment, threatened or attacked) could also have been influenced by the media and social media. From the research sample, this included 24 cases where teachers intervened to protect a child of a JW family from an alleged verbal or physical attack at school. The percentages are relatively small, but the numbers are concerning, and if applied across all Japan, the minority faith community could be vulnerable to increased hate speech of the kind that has turned to violence in some other countries.[25]

Those who chose to become, remain, or return to the Jehovah's Witness community varied widely in age and life situation. However, the findings reveal distinct patterns in attitudes and beliefs toward their professed religion. Conversion to the faith for most involved a study process that possibly helped in maintaining religious commitment, even decades for some. Respondents expressed broad consensus favoring internal aspects of the religion (closeness to God, personal improvement) over social attractions (pleasing family, finding friends) or ritual. And even with a common perception of societal discrimination, very few regretted their decision to become and remain Witnesses. While social influences did not govern the decision of most to become and remain Jehovah's Witnesses, interpersonal relationships were valued, as evidenced by the social support within the congregation and improved relationships with family and nonfamily.

The continued existence of religious groups large and small, ancient and modern, depends on the acquisition and transmission of beliefs and practices to succeeding generations. JWJ-QS identified the processes and motivations involved for those who have adopted the faith of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan. Their self-reported experiences generally align with objective descriptions of the belief system as rational, with learning and logic being among the most prominent attractions. However, for many respondents, intrafamilial ties also figure into the transmission of the faith and the process of learning and practicing the religion. The findings provide insights into the conversion experiences, personal motivations to belong to the religious community, and the general social relations of Jehovah's Witnesses.

[25] Jenny Hill and Jaroslav Lukiv, "Hamburg Shooting: Seven Killed in Attack on Jehovah's Witness Hall," March 10, 2023, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-64910415; Cherylann Mollan and Ashraf Padanna, "Kerala Attacks: India Police Investigate Deadly Blasts Targeting Jehovah's Witnesses," October 30, 2023, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-67259078. For a general discussion of recent religious discrimination, see Jonathan Fox, *Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods Before Me: Why Governments Discriminate against Religious Minorities* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108773171 and Eti Peretz and Jonathan Fox, "Religious Discrimination against Groups Perceived as Cults in Europe and the West," *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 22, nos. 3–4 (2021): 415–35 (1–21), https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21567689.2021.1969921.

SECTION THREE

Family Life

This section provides an overview of published research and JWJ-QS findings related to family life among Jehovah's Witness respondents in Japan, including demographic factors, household structures, marital relationships, and the roles of parents or guardians of minor children. The report explores aspects of family environment such as cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, and overall satisfaction, alongside parental approaches to discipline and morals education.

The stability of societies depends much on the strength and well-being of families. Healthy families care for the needs of family members from young children to older adults. Family is a cornerstone of Japanese culture—a source of protection, nurturance, and resilience. A Japanese proverb states 困ったときに支えてくれるのが家族である or *Komatta toki ni sasaete kureru no ga kazoku de aru* (When trouble comes, it is your family that supports you).

Disagreements and sometimes strong negative emotions are normal in families—between spouses, siblings, and parents and children. A pattern of familial conflict can contribute to emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual damage. Conversely, if handled constructively, such expressions can lead to problem-solving, personal growth, and a resilient family unit.

Traditional family life in Japan has been transformed in the face of broad demographic and cultural shifts. The stresses of modern life have sharply impacted the quality of family life.[1] For instance, a study of 42 countries showed that "parental burnout" is widespread, including in Japan.[2] The modern family faces economic instability and societal maladies. Divorce, neglect, and intergenerational tension have increased in Japan, as have child abuse cases, which have steadily risen in the 20 years since recordkeeping began.[3]

Yet, societal concern for the well-being of Japanese children and adolescents, as well as their prospects for a satisfying and productive future, indicate that Japanese culture continues to place a high priority on family life and the security and welfare of young people.

The views, experiences, and practices of Jehovah's Witnesses regarding family and child-rearing were a main focus of the JWJ-QS survey. This study of family life among Jehovah's Witnesses took place in the context of wider public discourse in Japan about such issues as changing family and gender roles, poverty in single-parent households, corporal punishment in schools and homes, child socialization, social identity, and personal fulfillment.[4]

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[1] Minja Kim Choe et al., "Nontraditional Family-Related Attitudes in Japan: Macro and Micro Determinants," *Population and Development Review* 40, no. 2 (2014): 241–71, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2014.00672.x.

[2] Isabelle Roskam et al., "Parental Burnout around the Globe: A 42-Country Study," *Affective Science* 2, no. 1 (2021): 58–79, https://doi.org/10.1007/s42761-020-00028-4; cf. Taishi Kawamoto, Kaichiro Furutani, and Maryam Alimardani, "Preliminary Validation of Japanese Version of the Parental Burnout Inventory and Its Relationship with Perfectionism," *Frontiers in Psychology* 9 (2018): Article 970, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00970.

[3] Daichi Itakura, "Record Child Abuse Cases of Over 122,000 Reported in 2023," *Asahi Shimbun*, February 13, 2024, https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/15163104; "Japan's Child Abuse Cases Revised Down by 4,000 for FY 2022," *Kyodo News*, September 24, 2024, https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2024/09/52ae02e72167-japans-child-abuse-cases-revised-down-by-4000-for-fy-2022.html.

[4] Anne E. Imamura, "The Japanese Family Faces 21st-Century Challenges," Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education, Stanford University, September 2004, https://spice.fsi.stanford.edu/docs/the_japanese_family_faces_21stcentury_challenges.

Amid these societal issues has come a wave of negative media coverage about Jehovah's Witnesses' family life, based on anecdotal accounts by individuals who were raised by Witness parents but who have since left the religious community and now advocate for governmental restrictions on Witnesses' religious practices. In essence, the controversy revolves around parents' responsibility to care for their children's physical and emotional well-being, parental approaches to discipline, parents' right to raise their children with certain moral and ethical values, and parents' respect for their children's autonomy as they grow into adulthood.

The JWJ-QS survey sought to contribute evidence-based findings about the views of the sample population, as well as the experiences and recollections of first- and second-generation Witnesses. Their responses help to answer the following questions:

How satisfied are Jehovah's Witnesses with their family life, and how do they rate the quality of their family functioning?

What factors do Jehovah's Witnesses consider important for a happy marriage, and how do they view marital commitment and divorce?

How do Jehovah's Witnesses define and practice child discipline? What do first- and second-generation Witnesses recall about the discipline administered at home and in school? What child discipline practices do Witnesses consider acceptable?

What sources of information do Jehovah's Witness parents draw from regarding parenting and sex education? And what is their view on transmitting religious belief to their children?

From the Witnesses' perspective, in what ways does the religion influence family environment and parenting practices?

The following literature review follows the basic sequence of variables reported on in the study findings. It outlines key indicators of family life and child-rearing that provide the context for the analysis of the variables used in the JWJ-QS survey. The introduction to each of the five main sections of the report begins with a brief discussion of these concepts. Some references drawn from research on Japan and other Asian populations are mentioned, as well as foundational and cross-cultural research on family life and parenting practices. Where available or relevant, extant research and/or cultural background specific to Jehovah's Witnesses are described. Citations to Jehovah's Witness publications are provided to indicate the religious organization's teachings on key topics. In light of the findings discussed in Section 2, literature on the interrelationship of family and religion is also included.

Families and Household Composition

The JWJ-QS survey sought to provide a portrait of family composition and demographics among the sample population, as well as the religious composition of their families. Such factors may impact or interact with characteristics of family life, such as family dynamics, marital relations, and childhood outcomes.

Japan in the post-World War II period has seen broad shifts in family composition, driven by such factors as economic and employment trends, urbanization patterns, changing gender and breadwinner roles, and the "bookend" demographic challenges of population aging and plummeting fertility.[5]

[5] Choe et al., "Nontraditional Family-Related Attitudes in Japan," 241–71; Fumie Kumagai, *Family Issues on Marriage, Divorce, and Older Adults in Japan: With Special Attention to Regional Variations* (Singapore: Springer, 2015). Kumagai's analysis of geographic distributions bore out significant variations between prefectures.

The number of single-person households has risen dramatically, rising from just 6.0% of the population in 1920 to 16.1% in 1960, to 32.4% in 2010, and 38.1% in 2020, nearly two-fifths of all households in Japan.[6] The number of older adults living alone or with only a spouse has doubled in the last 25 years.[7]

Studies of the Japanese family structure have long assumed the overall change from the traditional extended (or "stem") family to the nuclear (or "conjugal") family, though recent research has complicated that view.[8] The number of three-generation households in Japan with person(s) over age 65 declined from 36.5% of all households in 1955 to 7.1% in 2010, with an increase in older adults living in one- and two-person households. Yet, in terms of the national population of those 65 and older, 40% live with their adult children.[9]

Parental education, employment levels, and childcare support. Researchers have long tied levels of parental education and steady income to child psychosocial outcomes. Other social factors—mothers' decision as to whether to work or to be stay-at-home housewives, the size and make-up of mothers' social networks, and informal childcare support by kin (especially grandparents) and nonrelatives from the wider community—have been found to be important determinants of social development in children.[10]

Jehovah's Witnesses and family composition. Findings covered earlier in this report show considerable evidence of parental transmission of the faith within the Jehovah's Witness community. (See Figure 2.3). Study findings in this section provide a broader portrait of respondents' network of their Witness family, encompassing three generations (child, parent, grandparent), as well as siblings and other relatives.

A few quantitative studies have examined family connections among those who have adopted the religion. Sociologist Bryan Wilson's 1977 study of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan found that over 80% were introduced to the religion by nonrelatives, whereas 18.8% had been contacted by a parent or relatives. In these cases, intrafamilial transmission most commonly went from parent to child, but also from wives to husbands.[11] Studies of Jehovah's Witnesses have likewise found about one-fifth of Witnesses in Belgium and Kazakhstan, and one-tenth in Rwanda, had been born or raised in Witness households.[12] While the study found a much larger proportion of second-generation Witnesses in Japan in 2024, the overall pattern supports Wilson's conclusion in his 1977 study

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[6] National Institute of Population and Social Security Research [IPSS], Jinko Toukei Shiryoushuu: 2014 [Latest demographic statistics of 2014], http://www.ipss.go.jp/syoushika/tohkei/Popular/Popular2014.asp?chap=0, cited in Kumagai, *Family Issues,* 12.

[7] Kumagai, *Family Issues,* 28, 32.

[8] Rie Miyazaki, "A Descriptive Analysis of Three-Generation Households and Mothers' Employment in Japan, 2002–2019," *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 41, no. 13/14 (2021): 34–50, https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-04-2021-0075. For a reevaluation of the nuclearization theory based on data from the project National Family Research of Japan, see Akihiko Kato, *The Japanese Family System: Change, Continuity, and Regionality in the Long Twentieth Century* (Singapore: Springer, 2021). "Stem families" have been variously defined as single, multi-generational households, or as two-family households that are located adjacent or within walking distance of each other.

[9] Kumagai, *Family Issues*.

[10] Ryuichi Tanaka, "The Gender-Asymmetric Effect of Working Mothers on Children's Education: Evidence from Japan," *Journal of the Japanese and International Economies* 22, no. 4 (2008): 586–604, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jjie.2008.05.003; S. Matsuda, *What Supports Child-Rearing? The Strength of Moderate Networks* [Nani ga ikuji o sasaerunoka: chuyo na nettowaku no tsuyosa] (Tokyo, Japan: Keiso Shobo, 2008) (in Japanese); Masahito Morita et al., "Childcare Support and Child Social Development in Japan: Investigating the Mediating Role of Parental Psychological Condition and Parenting Style," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 376, no. 1827 (2021), https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2020.0025; cf. Abigail T. Stephan, "How Grandparents Inform Our Lives: A Mixed Methods Investigation of Intergenerational Influence on Young Adults," *Journal of Adult Development* 31 (2023): 40–52, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10804-023-09446-7.

[11] Bryan R. Wilson, "Aspects of Kinship and the Rise of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan," *Social Compass* 24, no. 1 (1977): 97–120, https://doi.org/10.1177/003776867702400107.

[12] Karel Dobbelaere and Bryan R. Wilson, "Jehovah's Witnesses in a Catholic Country: A Survey of Nine Belgian Congregations," *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 25, no. 50/1 (July–September 1980): 89–110, http://www.jstor.org/stable/30125170; Aldiyar Auyezbek and Serik Beissembayev, *Views, Values and Beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Republic of Kazakhstan: Analytical Report on the Results of the Study* (Astana, Kazakhstan, 2023), https://paperlab.kz/research and https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pKWfXzR2nA06iOF_HXOGLIQnLY8PfDf3/view; V. Nkurikiyinka and J. Chu, *Jehovah's Witnesses during and after the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda: Psychosocial Factors Related to Faith, Forgiveness, and Family* (Kigali, Rwanda: Organisation Religieuse des Témoins de Jéhovah, 2025).

of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan that "the movement is successful in winning people who are converted without the reinforcing effects of the influence of already-committed kinsfolk."[13]

JWJ-QS identified commonalities and differences in the family structures of Jehovah's Witnesses as compared with the general population. Investigation of family demographics revealed salient findings about the transmission of religious beliefs or affiliation in Jehovah's Witness families. To this point, no systematic research had been done on the beliefs and attitudes of multi-generation Jehovah's Witnesses who are currently part of the Witness community; thus, JWJ-QS makes an important contribution to that understudied topic.

Marital Status and Commitment, Views of Divorce, and Marital Happiness

The JWJ-QS survey gathered data on marital status and levels of commitment, as well as respondents' views on divorce and factors contributing to marital happiness. The study also inquired of the proportion of respondents in religiously homogeneous or heterogeneous marriages and their views on religious difference and divorce. In addition to general literature on these topics, religious teachings on marriage and divorce and findings from previous studies on Jehovah's Witnesses are covered below.

Traditionally, marriage is viewed as the commencement of family formation, yet the institution of marriage in Japan has undergone widespread changes. While arranged marriages in Japan outnumbered so-called "love marriages" in the decade of the 1940s, by the 1990s, love marriages far outpaced arranged unions.[14]

Declining fertility is of high concern in Japan. In 2015, all 47 prefectures averaged families of less than three. By 2025, family size in Tokyo was projected to fall below two.[15] Changing marriage patterns contribute to this decline. Increasing numbers of Japanese are choosing lifelong singleness, largely for economic or social factors.[16] About 17% of women and 22% of men will never marry at all.[17]

In addition to socio-economic factors affecting decisions to marry, unmarried Witnesses may have other salient reasons to remain single or delay marriage. As is true of certain other religions, Jehovah's Witnesses in general prefer to marry within their faith community. One multi-faith study of the "marriage market" in the United States noted that where same-faith spouses are preferred and available, young adults (24–31 years old) tend to marry a religiously similar partner. However, where such options are limited, both men and women tend to delay marriage rather than marry someone who does not share their religious values.[18]

Marital commitment. Commitment in marriage has been defined by Rusbult et al. as "intent to persist in a relationship, including long-term orientation toward the involvement as well as feelings of psychological attachment."[19] Their Investment Model Scale (IMS) has reliably found that commitment is the most robust

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[13] Wilson, "Aspects of Kinship," 111.

[14] Kato, *Japanese Family System,* 23–25.

[15] Kumagai, *Family Issues*.

[16] Martin Piotrowski, Erik Bond, and Ann Beutel, "Marriage Counterfactuals in Japan: Variation by Gender, Marital Status, and Time," *Demographic Research* 43, article 37 (2020): 1081–1118, https://doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2020.43.37.

[17] Kumagai, *Family Issues;* James Raymo, Fumiya Uchikoshi, and Shohei Yoda, "Marriage Intentions, Desires, and Pathways to Later and Less Marriage in Japan," *Demographic Research* 44, article 3 (2021): 67–98, https://doi.org/10.4054/demres.2021.44.3; Robert D. Retherford, Naohiro Ogawa, and Rikiya Matsukura, "Late Marriage and Less Marriage in Japan," *Population and Development Review* 27, no. 1 (March 2001): 65–102, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2695155.

[18] David McClendon, "Religion, Marriage Markets, and Assortative Mating in the United States," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 78, no. 5 (2016): 1399–1421, https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12353.

[19] Caryl E. Rusbult, John M. Martz, and Christopher R. Agnew, "The Investment Model Scale: Measuring Commitment Level, Satisfaction Level, Quality of Alternatives, and Investment Size," *Personal Relationships* 5, no. 4 (1998): 359–60, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6811.1998.tb00177.x.

predictor of persistence in marriage, more so than marital satisfaction or happiness.[20] Commitment can serve to transform self-interest in marriage into an orientation that fosters self-sacrifice and resists considering the option of alternative partners.[21] Well-functioning marriages correlate with higher rates of child well-being.[22]

Same-faith and mixed-belief marriages. Religion is a key factor related to the stability of long-term marriages.[23] Religious homogeneity in marriage predicts less conflict, while interfaith (mixed-belief) marriages often see higher rates of discord and divorce.[24] Shared religious values predict higher rates of satisfaction and lower rates of conflict and divorce, perhaps because couples have developed common strategies to settle disagreements.[25]

In studies showing that same-faith marriages have a strong influence on the quality of marital relationships, as well as marital happiness and satisfaction, the benefits are linked not just with religious practice (e.g., worship attendance), but religious beliefs and attitudes about such family-related issues as marriage and parenting, work-life balance, gender division of household responsibilities, and political views.[26] Considering the different cultural and religious context in Japan, research on mixed-belief marriages may be less applicable within the JWJ-QS sample population. Moreover, the impact of religiousness on mixed-belief couples may be highly individualized in the way their religious views influence their behaviors and interactions. As one study suggests, "the most important factor is how the beliefs and practices are applied, rather than what they are."[27]

Bryan Wilson's 1977 study of Jehovah's Witnesses found no overall pattern of discord between JW and non-JW family members, concluding: "Becoming a Jehovah's Witness is not necessarily, or even regularly, a cause of family dissension in Japan." In addition to accommodating attitudes among JW respondents, Wilson also speculated that the "general indifference to religion of Japanese men mitigated the tensions" that might otherwise have arisen over religious differences.[28]

Marital commitment despite religious differences. A mediating factor in potential strain over religious difference is a sense of marital commitment based on

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[20] Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew, "The Investment Model Scale"; Benjamin Le and Christopher R. Agnew, "Commitment and Its Theorized Determinants: A Meta-Analysis of the Investment Model," *Personal Relationships* 10, no. 1 (2003): 37–57, https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6811.00035; Khanh-Van T. Bui, Letitia Anne Peplau, and Charles T. Hill, "Testing the Rusbult Model of Relationship Commitment and Stability in a 15-Year Study of Heterosexual Couples," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 22, no. 12 (1996): 1244–57, https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672962212005.

[21] Little research has been done on non-Western couples. For one example, see Rumaya Juhari et al., "Marital Commitment as a Function of Marital Satisfaction, Marital Investment and Marital Alternatives among Working Women in Malaysia" (2019), https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Marital-commitment-as-a-function-of-marital-marital-Juhari-Yaacob/5942a1ac7147437639c1e09d434f73a478839ec2.

[22] Kayla Knopp et al., "Within- and Between-Family Associations of Marital Functioning and Child Well-Being," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 79, no. 2 (2017): 451–61, https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12373.

[23] Reza Karimi, Maryam Bakhtiyari, and Abbas Masjedi Arani, "Protective Factors of Marital Stability in Long-Term Marriage Globally: A Systematic Review," *Epidemiology and Health* 41 (2019): Article e2019023, https://doi.org/10.4178/epih.e2019023.

[24] Public Religion Research Institute, *Family Religious Dynamics and Interfaith Relationships*, (PRRI survey report, May 10, 2024), https://www.prri.org/spotlight/family-religious-dynamics-and-interfaith-relationships/; Kristin Taylor Curtis and Christopher G. Ellison, "Religious Heterogamy and Marital Conflict: Findings from the National Survey of Families and Households," *Journal of Family Issues* 23, no. 4 (2002): 551–76, https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X02023004005; David C. Dollahite et al., "Beyond Religious Rigidities: Religious Firmness and Religious Flexibility as Complementary Loyalties in Faith Transmission," *Religions* 10, no. 2 (2019): 111, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10020111.

[25] Christopher G. Ellison, Amy M. Burdette, and W. Bradford Wilcox, "The Couple That Prays Together: Race and Ethnicity, Religion, and Relationship Quality among Working-Age Adults," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72, no. 4 (2010): 963–75, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00742.x.

[26] H. H. Kelley, L. D. Marks, and D. C. Dollahite, "Uniting and Dividing Influences of Religion in Marriage among Highly Religious Couples," *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 12, no. 2 (2020): 167–77, https://doi.org/10.1037/rel0000262; McClendon, "Religion, Marriage Markets"; Sarah Taylor, "Praying, Playing and Happy Families: An Examination of the Relationship between Family Religiosity, Family Recreation, and Family Functioning" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 2005), 304, https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/304.

[27] Kelley, Marks, and Dollahite, "Uniting and Dividing"; Patrick C. Hughes and Fran C. Dickson, "Communication, Marital Satisfaction, and Religious Orientation in Interfaith Marriages," *Journal of Family Communication* 5, no. 1 (2005): 25–41, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327698jfc0501_2.

[28] Wilson, "Aspects of Kinship," 115.

moral precepts, over and above any feelings of personal attachment or satisfaction.[29] Religious principles that frame the marital bond as permanent and inviolable can provide an additional layer of motivation to maintain marital longevity.[30] For Jehovah's Witnesses, the marriage vow is considered binding regardless of whether the spouse shares one's religious beliefs or not. Marital infidelity is viewed as a grievous sin.[31]

In mixed-belief marriages, religious differences can be both a source of tension and a bonding influence. For example, a nonreligious spouse may resent their spouse's time spent at worship services, but the nonreligious spouse may have increased trust because the religious spouse's beliefs may include a strong commitment to marital fidelity. Religious practices and beliefs may provide strategies to help religious spouses manage stress, anger, discord, and so forth.[32]

Divorce rates. Although quite low in comparison with other industrialized nations, divorce rates in Japan have risen in recent decades to about 20%.[33] Commentators associate the increase with the strong influence of economic struggles that can place stress on a marriage.[34] Views on divorce have important ramifications for the children of married couples. Nearly all childbearing in Japan takes place within marriage.[35] Marital dissolution of couples with minor children accounts for approximately 60% of divorces in Japan.[36] The present law makes no provision for joint custody; maternal custody is the norm, resulting in low-income, single-parent households.[37]

Research shows higher well-being among children in families with two continuously married parents as compared with other family structures. The cognitive, social, and emotional benefits such children experience may be due, in part, to a higher standard of living, the effect of collaborative co-parenting, and fewer stressful situations.[38] The long-lasting negative impacts of divorce or marital separation on children have also been well documented, including psychological effects (depression, low self-esteem), behavioral problems (high-risk conduct, aggression), poor academic performance, and troubled peer relations.[39]

Late-life divorce and separation (*jukunen rikon*) describe the situation of a small subset of older

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[29] Michael P. Johnson, "Commitment to Personal Relationships," in *Advances in Personal Relationships*, ed. W. H. Jones and D. W. Perlman, vol. 3 (London: Jessica Kingsley, 1991), 117–43; Michael P. Johnson, John P. Caughlin, and Ted L. Huston, "The Tripartite Nature of Marital Commitment: Personal, Moral, and Structural Reasons to Stay Married," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 61, no. 1 (1999): 160–77, https://doi.org/10.2307/353891.

[30] Annette Mahoney, Daniel D. Flint, and James S. McGraw, "Spirituality, Religion, and Marital/Family Issues," chap. 9 in *Handbook of Spirituality, Religion, and Mental Health*, ed. David H. Rosmarin and Harold G. Koenig, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Elsevier Academic Press, 2020), 159–77, https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-816766-3.00009-4.

[31] "The Bible's Viewpoint: Adultery," *Awake!* June 2015, 12–13, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/g201506/adultery/; "Infidelity—Its Tragic Consequences," *Awake!* April 22, 1999, 3–5, https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/101999281.

[32] Kelley, Marks, and Dollahite, "Uniting and Dividing."

[33] Retherford et al., "Late Marriage and Less Marriage in Japan."

[34] H. Yūsuke and Y. Shōhei, "Rikon kōdō to shakai-kaisō tono kankei ni kansuru jisshō-teki kenkyū" [An empirical study of the relationship between divorce behavior and social stratification], 季刊家計経済研究 (kikan kakei Keizai kenkyū) [Japanese Journal of Research on Household Economics] 101 (2014): 51–62. See also Kato, *Japanese Family System*, and Kumagai, *Family Issues,* 89–117.

[35] Fumiya Uchikoshi, James M. Raymo, and Shohei Yoda, "Family Norms and Declining First-Marriage Rates: The Role of Sibship Position in the Japanese Marriage Market," *Demography* 60, no. 3 (2023): 939–63, https://doi.org/10.1215/00703370-10741873.

[36] Allison Alexy, *Intimate Disconnections: Divorce and the Romance of Independence in Contemporary Japan* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2020), 17, https://bibliopen.org/p/bopen/9780226701004.

[37] Kumagai, *Family Issues*. Starting in 2026, joint custody will be permitted; see Mari Yamaguchi, "Japan Passes a Revised Law Allowing Joint Child Custody for Divorced Parents for the First Time," *Associated Press*, May 17, 2024, https://apnews.com/article/japan-child-custody-law-revision-9ddb15431470294dae180b5c9e3d9282.

[38] Paul R. Amato, "The Impact of Family Formation Change on the Cognitive, Social, and Emotional Well-Being of the Next Generation," *Future of Children* 15, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 75–96, https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.2005.0012. Some researchers maintain that for some children, strained marriages may be more damaging than divorce; see Kelly Musick and Ann Meier, "Are Both Parents Always Better Than One? Parental Conflict and Young Adult Well-Being," *Social Science Research* 39, no. 5 (September 2010): 814–30, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2010.03.002.

[39] Brian D'Onofrio and Robert Emery, "Parental Divorce or Separation and Children's Mental Health," *World Psychiatry: Official Journal of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA)* 18, no. 1 (2019): 100–101, https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20590; P. R. Amato and B. Keith, "Parental Divorce and the Well-Being of Children: A Meta-Analysis," *Psychological Bulletin* 110, no. 1 (1991): 26–46, https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.110.1.26.

adults in Japan, with a five-fold increase over the last 60 years in divorces between couples married 20 years or more. The rise in late-life divorces has been tied to the retirement of Japanese men who had worked long hours outside the home. Their wives, who had developed independent lifestyles, were resentful of the new demands to serve their once-absent, now-retired husbands who have no hobbies or outside interests.[40]

Witness publications and programs contain much advice on strengthening marriage bonds, fulfilling marital obligations, and overcoming marital conflict.[41] From a doctrinal standpoint, Jehovah's Witnesses consider the marriage union to be sacred and permanent. Burdensome living conditions or strained family relations alone would not be considered valid grounds for divorce. The only scripturally valid reason for divorce is adultery.[42]

Marital happiness. Global research on marriage generally shows that marital satisfaction declines over time and that women find less satisfaction in marriage than men.[43] Top reasons for satisfaction in marriage in Japan converged around conversation, flexibility in household roles, and respect for individuality. For Japanese men, reasons for dissatisfaction included lack of "skinship" (a Japanese term for close, affectionate physical contact) and patience, and for women, lack of daily appreciation and help with household chores.[44]

A 2004 study of 22 industrialized countries found that Japan has the most uneven gender divide with housework.[45] Wives' happiness rose when husbands performed more housework; conversely, the larger a husband's share of housework, the greater his unhappiness in marriage. The proportion of each spouse's housework appears to be a key mediator between gender and marital happiness."[46]

The responsibilities of child-rearing can place added stress on marital bonds, even if couples find parenting to be fulfilling. Lower levels of marital satisfaction are reported by parents with more education and higher income, perhaps because of the challenge of balancing the demands of marriage, parenting, and career. Conversely, an international study of 33 countries and territories found religiosity to be a buffer against decreasing marital satisfaction as family size grows. One reason may be that religious communities value and support more traditional family roles and widen the nurturing environment in which children can learn religious teachings and prosocial values.[47]

Mismatched views on gender roles can be a source of marital friction. However, certain teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses regarding family roles may help to mitigate potential tensions between marriage mates, such as over household chores. Witness teaching materials regularly discuss the need for marriage

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[40] Kumagai, *Family Issues*; Alexy, *Intimate Disconnections*.

[41] See, for instance, the list of articles on Jehovah's Witnesses – Official Website (jw.org,) under the topic of "Marriage," https://www.jw.org/en/bible-teachings/family/marriage-gods-view/.

[42] "How Do Jehovah's Witnesses View Divorce?," Jehovah' Witnesses – Official Website, https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/divorce-jw-view/; "When You Are Disappointed with Your Marriage," *Awake!*, March 2014, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/g201403/disappointed-with-your-marriage/. Marital separation may be necessary under extreme situations, such as willful nonsupport or abusive treatment.

[43] Karimi, Bakhtiyari, and Masjedi Arani, "Protective Factors of Marital Stability"; cf. Kathrin Boerner et al., "'His' and 'Her' Marriage? The Role of Positive and Negative Marital Characteristics in Global Marital Satisfaction among Older Adults," *Journals of Gerontology. Series B, Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences* 69, no. 4 (2014): 579–89, https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbu032.

[44] Kathryn E. Goldfarb, "The Japanese Family: Touch, Intimacy and Feeling," *Social Science Japan Journal* 18, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 291–94, https://doi.org/10.1093/ssjj/jyv023; "Over Half of Married Women in Japan Dissatisfied with Husband's Housework: Survey," *Mainichi*, January 10, 2024, https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20240110/p2a/00m/0na/017000c.

[45] Makiko Fuwa, "Macro-Level Gender Inequality and the Division of Household Labor in 22 Countries," *American Sociological Review* 69, no. 6 (2004): 751–67, https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240406900601.

[46] Galye Kaufman and Hiromi Taniguchi, "Gender and Marital Happiness in Japan," *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 69–87, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23028801. See also N. Akiko, "Kekkon-seikatsu no keika ni yoru tsuma no fūfu-kankei manzoku-do no henka" [Change in Japanese wives' marital satisfaction over the course of marital life], 社会福祉 *(Shakai fukushi)* [Social Welfare] 52 (2011): 123–31, https://www.pdrc.keio.ac.jp/jpsc/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/066_09.pdf.

[47] Marta Kowal et al., "When and How Does the Number of Children Affect Marital Satisfaction? An International Survey," *PLoS ONE* 16, no. 4 (2021): Article e0249516, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0249516.

partners to prioritize loyalty, open communication, mutual respect and support, and collaboration in managing home, children, and finances. Contrary to traditional male roles, illustrations in JW literature depict husbands and fathers sharing in housework and childcare.[48] Especially for JW women in mixed-belief marriages, Witnesses publish suggestions on maintaining marital harmony in such articles as "Happiness Is Possible in a Divided Household: Cultivate Peace in the Home."[49]

The current study identified what Jehovah's Witness men and women considered important to maintaining marital relationships and which aspects they feel are key to marital happiness.

Family Environment and Child Socialization

Recognizing the importance of a family environment conducive to children's well-being, parenting expert Joan Grusec wrote, "There is no more important job in the world than raising the next generation."[50] Effective parenting fosters a nurturing environment and a sense of security to help children become well-adjusted and productive adults in the community. Yet, as Grusec admits, family parenting advice, even if research-based, can be confusing or counterintuitive, and even contradictory.

The vast body of family research and shifting advice by child-rearing experts demonstrates that consensus on what makes a good parent remains elusive. With many interrelated and confounding variables tied to child outcomes, researchers avoid attributing credit or blame to any single factor. Despite the array of factors, certain elements emerge as key in a child's life.

Family functioning: Cohesion, expressiveness, and conflict. Functioning within the family environment involves how family members relate to one another and work together in daily life as a family unit.[51] Family functioning and marital satisfaction are closely associated, with the marital relationship influencing the overall family dynamics.[52]

Based on Olson's widely used Circumplex Model,[53] the Brief Family Relationship Scale includes three factors that contribute to family functioning and satisfaction: Cohesion, Expressiveness, and Conflict.[54] Studies have investigated how these three characteristics of family life influence the social, emotional, and behavioral health of children and adolescents, with somewhat mixed results.[55] Olson cautions that researchers need to consider specific factors, such as ethnic or religious customs, that can differ widely but still foster functional family dynamics.[56] Researchers have noted

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[48] "The Head of Every Man Is the Christ," *Watchtower*, February 2021, 2–7, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-february-2021/The-Head-of-Every-Man-Is-the-Christ/; "Spend Quality Time Together," Jehovah's Witnesses – Official Website, https://www.jw.org/en/bible-teachings/family/quality-time-together/; "How to Be a Good Dad," Jehovah's Witnesses – Official Website, https://www.jw.org/en/bible-teachings/family/how-to-be-a-good-dad/.

[49] "Happiness Is Possible in a Divided Household," *Watchtower,* February 15, 2012, 26–30, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/w20120215/Happiness-Is-Possible-in-a-Divided-Household/.

[50] Joan E. Grusec, *Principles of Effective Parenting: How Socialization Works* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2019).

[51] Camilla Kin Ming Lo et al., "Changes in, and Factors Associated with Family Functioning: Results of Four Cross-Sectional Household Surveys from 2011 to 2017 in Hong Kong," *BMC Public Health* 24 (2024): Article 160, https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-17643-6; David H. Olson, "Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems," *Journal of Family Therapy* 22, no. 2 (2000): 144–67, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6427.00144; cf. Liangtie Dai and Lingna Wang, "Review of Family Functioning," *Open Journal of Social Sciences* 3, no. 12 (2015): 134–41, https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2015.312014.

[52] Xianxian Du et al., "Marital Satisfaction, Family Functioning, and Children's Mental Health—The Effect of Parental Co-Viewing," *Children* 9, no. 2 (2022): Article 216, https://doi.org/10.3390/children9020216.

[53] Olson, "Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems."

[54] Carlotta Ching Ting Fok et al., "The Brief Family Relationship Scale: A Brief Measure of the Relationship Dimension in Family Functioning," *Assessment* 21, no. 1 (2014): 67–72, https://doi.org/10.1177/1073191111425856. The Brief Family Relationship Scale is adapted from the 90-item Family Environment Scale by Rudolf H. Moos and Bernice S. Moos, "A Typology of Family Social Environments," *Family Process* 15, no. 4 (1976): 357–71, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.1976.00357.x.

[55] Gregory M. Fosco and David M. Lydon-Staley, "Implications of Family Cohesion and Conflict for Adolescent Mood and Well-Being: Examining Within- and Between-Family Processes on a Daily Timescale," *Family Process* 59, no. 4 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12515; Lo et al., "Changes in, and Factors Associated with Family Functioning"; Melissa L. Sturge-Apple, Patrick T. Davies, and E. Mark Cummings, "Typologies of Family Functioning and Children's Adjustment during the Early School Years," *Child Development* 81, no. 4 (2010): 1320–35, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01471.x.

[56] Olson, "Circumplex Model of Marital & Family Systems."

regional differences in parenting practices and styles, which they attribute largely to differences between individualistic cultures, such as in Western lands, versus collectivistic cultures in Asian lands.[57] Chinese mothers, for instance, emphasized "encouragement of modesty, protection, directiveness, shaming/love withdrawal, and maternal involvement," which were not necessarily parenting priorities among American parents.[58]

Family cohesion refers to the emotional connections between family members that generate closeness, healthy decision-making, and shared norms. For optimal function, cohesion is balanced with flexibility and is neither overly enmeshed (controlling, rigid) nor emotionally disengaged (cold, emotionally unavailable, unsupportive).[59] Healthy family cohesion relates strongly to adolescent mental health, resulting in lower rates of depression, anger, and anxiety, and heightened life satisfaction, meaning in life, and positive well-being.[60] A 2017 study of university students in Japan found that those who rated their families as high in family functioning, specifically cohesion and flexibility, reported correspondingly high subjective well-being.[61]

Emotional **expressiveness** in families involves the sharing of feelings and thoughts through verbal and nonverbal communication. By their example, older family members signal to young children the range of normative emotions and responses. When parents foster positive emotional communication and a supportive, open family environment, children and adolescents learn appropriate emotional understanding and regulation.[62]

The emotional climate within a home can vary depending on how often, how intensely, and how positively or negatively emotions are expressed. Positive emotional expressiveness includes joy, affection, and enthusiasm, though Asian cultures tend to display these norms less openly.[63] Negative emotional expressiveness includes anger, blame, contempt, criticism, sadness, or fear. While there is much evidence for the benefits of positive expressiveness on children, empirical evidence of the effects of negative expressiveness on children and adolescents is less conclusive.[64] A study of Japanese preschoolers found that maternal negative expressiveness correlated not with children's sensitivity to criticism but rather their higher rating of their own competency to complete a task, perhaps a defensive reaction to criticism.[65] Likewise, low expressiveness did not dampen positive emotions in Chinese adolescents to the extent that it did in American adolescents.[66]

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[57] David Matsumoto, Seung Hee Yoo, and Johnny Fontaine, "Mapping Expressive Differences around the World: The Relationship between Emotional Display Rules and Individualism Versus Collectivism," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 39, no. 1 (2008): 55–74, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022107311854.

[58] Peixia Wu et al., "Similarities and Differences in Mothers' Parenting of Preschoolers in China and the United States," *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 26, no. 6 (2002): 482, https://doi.org/10.1080/01650250143000436.

[59] Sturge-Apple, Davies, and Cummings, "Typologies of Family Functioning."

[60] Fernando I. Rivera et al., "Family Cohesion and Its Relationship to Psychological Distress among Latino Groups," *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 30, no. 3 (2008): 357–78, https://doi.org/10.1177/0739986308318713.

[61] I. Yasuhiro, "Daigaku-sei no shukan-teki kōfuku-kan ni okeru meta ninchi oyobi kazoku-kinō no eikyō" [The effect of meta cognition and family function on subjective well-being of university students], 京都教育大学教育実践研究紀要 (Kyōto kyōiku daigaku kyōiku jissen kenkyū kiyō) [Kyoto University of Education, Journal of Educational Research] 17 (2017): 81–92.

[62] Rachel D. Freed et al., "The Relationship between Family Functioning and Adolescent Depressive Symptoms: The Role of Emotional Clarity," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 45, no. 3 (2016): 505–19, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-016-0429-y; Sonja Ĉotar Konrad, "Family Emotional Expressiveness and Family Structure," *Psihologija* 49, no. 4 (2016): 319–33, https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=688541.

[63] Jude Cassidy et al., "Family-Peer Connections: The Roles of Emotional Expressiveness within the Family and Children's Understanding of Emotions," *Child Development* 63, no. 3 (1992): 603–18, https://doi.org/10.2307/1131349; Diana Morelen et al., "Family Emotion Expressivity, Emotion Regulation, and the Link to Psychopathology: Examination across Race," *British Journal of Psychology* 104, no. 2 (2013): 149–66, https://psychology.uga.edu/sites/default/files/Morelen%20et%20al.%2C%202013.pdf; Matsumoto, Yoo, and Fontaine, "Mapping Expressive Differences."

[64] Miranda Gao and Zhuo Rachel Han, "Family Expressiveness Mediates the Relation between Cumulative Family Risks and Children's Emotion Regulation in a Chinese Sample," *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 25, no. 5 (2016): 1570–80, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-015-0335-z.

[65] Ai Mizokawa, "Relationships between Maternal Emotional Expressiveness and Children's Sensitivity to Teacher Criticism," *Frontiers in Psychology* 4 (2013): Article 807, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00807.

[66] Yena Kyeong, Rebecca Y. M. Cheung, and Cecilia S. Cheung, "The Role of Family Expressiveness in American and Chinese Adolescents' Emotional Experiences," *Social Development* 30, no. 4 (2021): 1056–76, https://doi.org/10.1111/sode.12515.

Family conflict entails primarily verbal communication involving anger or aggression.[67] Marital and family conflict have been associated with a variety of mental health issues, such as depression and aggressiveness, in children and adolescents.[68] Although such effects seem intuitive, a large majority of children (about 90%) who experience family conflict do not appear to experience adjustment problems.[69] Possible moderating factors include parental attachment and monitoring, and positive peer relationships, that may offer protection from negative effects of family conflict.[70] Listening and speaking skills, open disclosure of feelings, and respect are necessary for effective problem solving.

Family satisfaction. Family satisfaction could be described as an appraisal of the results of various facets of family functioning that generate the actual conditions manifest in the healthy habits and patterns of daily family life, such as positivity, loyalty, good communication, effective problem-solving, coping with stress, mutual affection, and quality family time.[71] Similar to family functioning, high marital commitment correlates with high family satisfaction.[72]

Beyond family functioning, external conditions, such as age, income, life cycle stages, health, and living conditions impact family satisfaction. For parents, having children has been linked to both increases and decreases in feelings of well-being and family happiness, with differences correlated with gender, age of the child, employment situation, and other factors.[73]

Parental teaching and socialization of children. The socialization of children (*shitsuke* in Japanese) is the process by which children acquire values, behaviors, and skills needed to become a contributing member of their social group, community, and wider society. For instance, children need to learn to cooperate, communicate, regulate their emotions, cope with conflict or distress, and consider others' needs.[74]

The parent-child relationship is the primary source of child socialization. The ultimate goal of effective parenting is not simply conformity but rather the internalization of values and behaviors that become part of the child's own self. Granting appropriate degrees of children's autonomy and providing explanations when disciplining achieves moral internalization more effectively than shows of force.[75] Raising a child "to move in a moral direction . . . is an art in parenting."[76] Or, as Japanese mothers expressed it, *shitsuke* was not successful "if a child obeyed in body but not in heart."[77]

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[67] James W. Hannum and Johanna M. Mayer, "Validation of Two Family Assessment Approaches," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 46, no. 3 (1984): 741–48, https://doi.org/10.2307/352617.

[68] Yingcheng Xu et al., "Associations of Parent-Adolescent Discrepancies in Family Cohesion and Conflict with Adolescent Impairment," *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 26, no. 12 (2017): 3360–69, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-017-0825-2.

[69] Diana Formoso, Nancy A. Gonzales, and Leona S. Aiken, "Family Conflict and Children's Internalizing and Externalizing Behavior: Protective Factors," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 28, no. 2 (2000): 175–99, https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1005135217449; Frank D. Fincham, John H. Grych, and Lisa N. Osborne, "Does Marital Conflict Cause Child Maladjustment? Directions and Challenges for Longitudinal Research," *Journal of Family Psychology* 8, no. 2 (1994): 128–40, https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.8.2.128.

[70] E. Mark Cummings and Jennifer N. Schatz, "Family Conflict, Emotional Security, and Child Development: Translating Research Findings into a Prevention Program for Community Families," *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review* 15, no. 1 (2012): 14–27, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-012-0112-0.

[71] Małgorzata Szcześniak and Maria Tułecka, "Family Functioning and Life Satisfaction: The Mediatory Role of Emotional Intelligence," *Psychology Research and Behavior Management* 13 (2020): 223–32, https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S240898.

[72] Hsin-Pei Wu and Yu-Mei Wang, "Women's Work-Family Conflict and Its Consequences in Commuter Marriages: The Moderating Role of Spouses' Family Commitment in a Dyad Analysis," *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (2022): Article 860717, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.860717.

[73] Yazaki, "The Ambivalent Effects of Family on Well-Being: Family Norms and Well-Being in Japan," *Senshu Social Well-Being Review* 8 (2021): 17–31, https://doi.org/10.34360/00012563. Cf. results in a large study of Chinese parents in Quanlei Yu et al., "Who Gains More? The Relationship between Parenthood and Well-Being," *Evolutionary Psychology* 17, no. 3 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1177/1474704919860467.

[74] Joan E. Grusec, *Principles of Effective Parenting;* Susan D. Holloway, *Women and Family in Contemporary Japan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[75] Lansford et al., "Trajectories of Internalizing, Externalizing, and Grades for Children Who Have and Have Not Experienced Their Parents' Divorce or Separation," *Journal of Family Psychology* 20, no. 2 (2006): 292–301, https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.20.2.292.

[76] Barbara M. Stilwell, Matthew Galvin, and Stephen M. Kopta, *Right vs. Wrong: Raising a Child with a Conscience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

[77] Holloway, *Women and Family in Contemporary Japan,* 140.

Psychologists in the field of child development commonly distinguish three main parenting styles: authoritarian (harsh, demanding, unresponsive), permissive (overly responsive to child demands, lacking boundaries), and authoritative (firm, communicative, nurturing). Of the three styles, authoritative parenting is seen as the most effective in socializing children to be well-balanced, secure, confident, and self-regulated. Authoritative parenting has been associated with higher levels of prosocial behavior, sympathy, and positive social relations.[78]

Socialization of children and adolescents in religious values is associated with a wide array of benefits. These effects are thought to begin with moral directives that influence behaviors and attitudes.[79] Youths may refrain from risky sexual activity, delinquency, and substance abuse, and thus may avoid negative mental health outcomes. Conversely, youths may experience improved academic performance, social integration, and personal fulfillment through engagement in prosocial behaviors. Consistent parental religious practice, combined with high family functioning and parental warmth, are attributes correlated with successful transmission of religiosity from parent to child.[80]

Societal context of corporal punishment in Japan. Sociologist Tadashi Fukutake described the uncertainty of parents in post-World War II Japan: "Not knowing how to construct a new set of values, they were not sure how to bring up their children." Writing in 1974, Fukutake continued, "Children who were raised in this confusion are now trying to bring up their own children."[81] During this period, child-rearing manuals became very popular among mothers of young children.[82]

Uncertainty about child discipline was not exclusive to Japan. In the United States in the 1980s, a majority of parents reportedly spanked their children, even as experts debated the practice.[83] A comparative study of child-rearing manuals in the 1990s from China, France, Japan, and the United States found that manuals from Japan "were the most likely to approve of physical punishment under certain conditions."[84] Studies of corporal punishment in Japan have consistently shown that mothers administer discipline more often than fathers. According to some sources, discipline may be strict, but the frequency is relatively low.[85]

The Japan General Social Survey (JGSS) for 2000/2001 asked, "Do you agree or disagree with the statement that 'corporal punishment by parents is sometimes necessary'?" and a similar question about teachers. Regarding corporal punishment by parents, 60.9% were either "in favor" or "somewhat in favor," and 50.5% in favor of teachers using corporal punishment. The JGSS for 2008 posed similar questions. Over 65%

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[78] Diane Baumrind, "The Influence of Parenting Style on Adolescent Competence and Substance Use," *Journal of Early Adolescence* 11, no. 1 (1991): 56–95, https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431691111004; Gustavo Carlo et al., "Parenting Styles or Practices? Parenting, Sympathy, and Prosocial Behaviors among Adolescents," *Journal of Genetic Psychology* 168, no. 2 (2007): 147–76, https://doi.org/10.3200/GNTP.168.2.147-176.

[79] Lisa D. Pearce, Jeremy E. Uecker, and Melinda Lundquist Denton, "Religion and Adolescent Outcomes: How and Under What Conditions Religion Matters," *Annual Review of Sociology* 45 (2019): 201–22, http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073117-041317.

[80] Christopher D. Bader and Scott A. Desmond, "Do as I Say and as I Do: The Effects of Consistent Parental Beliefs and Behaviors upon Religious Transmission," *Sociology of Religion* 67, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 313–29, https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/67.3.313. For a comprehensive review of research related to youth, religion, and spirituality, see Annette M. Mahoney, *The Science of Children's Religious and Spiritual Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108874342.

[81] Tadashi Fukutake, *Japanese Society Today* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1974), 43.

[82] Ueno et al., "Changes in Parental Uneasiness for Child-Rearing with the Times of the Trend in Literatures," *Bulletin of Seinan Jo Gakuin University* 14 (2010): 185–96; Holloway, *Women and Family in Contemporary Japan*.

[83] "Parents and Experts Split on Spanking," *New York Times,* June 19, 1985, Section C, 9, https://www.nytimes.com/1985/06/19/garden/parents-and-experts-split-on-spanking.html.

[84] Sarane Spence Boocock, "Social Prisms: An International Comparison of Childrearing Manuals," *International Journal of Japanese Sociology* 8, no. 1 (1999): 16, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6781.1999.tb00062.x.

[85] Sachiko Baba et al., "Factors Associated with Family Member's Spanking of 3.5-year-old Children in Japan," *Journal of Epidemiology* 30, no. 10 (2020): 464–73, https://doi.org/10.2188/jea.JE20190160; Fumie Kumagai, "Socialization of Youth in Japan, India, and the USA," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 35 (1980): 85–98, https://doi.org/10.11151/eds1951.35.85.

agreed with corporal punishment by parents. More than 40% of men surveyed had experienced physical punishment, the largest age group being between 20 and 34 years old. Among males, the same age group, 20 to 34 years old, expressed the highest agreement with corporal punishment by parents. The highest agreement by women was among those aged 65 and over. Generally speaking, the survey found no strong relationship with social attributes, such as education levels.[86]

In 2019, Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) proposed amendments to the Child Welfare Act in conjunction with a steep rise in reported cases of child abuse.[87] The amendments barred all forms of corporal punishment in child discipline, even by parents. Recognizing the persistence of the practice, the MHLW launched a campaign to ban the "whip of love" (*Ai no Muchi*). The ban on corporal punishment was enacted and came into force in April 2020.[88]

Japanese parents who experienced physical discipline as children are more likely to use the same discipline approaches with their own children.[89] A December 2019 public opinion poll in Japan indicated that a majority of adults, with or without children, believed that corporal punishment is sometimes necessary at least occasionally. Using nationwide population data in Japan, a longitudinal survey reported in 2020 that the reported frequency of spanking had decreased.[90] A 2021 survey reported that over 50% of parents or guardians in Japan reported having hit their children.[91]

Domains of child socialization. The socialization of children, however, involves a vastly wider range of parent-child interactions than simply discipline methods. To contextualize the issue of child discipline, a useful framework is the concept of "domains"—the social contexts a child occupies in which socialization can occur.[92] The first two domains help create a close parent-child bond that effectively transmits values:

Protection: Especially during stressful times, children acquire confidence in their parent(s) as a reliable source of safety and comfort, having their best interests at heart.

Mutual Reciprocity: Parents grant their children's requests (for instance, while at play or preparing food), which increases children's compliance and teaches reciprocity.

The last three domains are different contexts in which specific values and actions are fostered:

Control: In the context of misbehaviors, parents respond with the goal of helping children to avoid repeat offenses and teaching children self-control by use of reward or punishment, reasoning, or explanations.

Guided Learning: Teaching at children's level of understanding helps them internalize parental

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[86] H. Iwai, "容認される「親による体罰」ーJGSS-2008による「体罰」に対する意識の分析ー"Yōnin sareru 'oya niyoru taibatsu': JGSS-2008 niyoru 'taibatsu' ni taisuru ishiki no bunseki" [Social Tolerance for the Use of Physical Punishment by Parents: An Analysis of Attitude toward Physical Punishment Using JGSS-2008], *JGSS Research Series* 7 (2010): 49–59.

[87] Aya Goto, Pamela J. Surkan, and Michael R. Reich, "Challenges to Changing the Culture of Parenting in Japan," *Journal of Epidemiology* 30, no. 10 (2020): 427–28, https://doi.org/10.2188/jea.JE20190265; Tamaki Hosoda-urban, "Exploring Gaps in Child Maltreatment Trends: A Narrative Review from the U.S. and Japan," *Yonago Acta Medica* 67, no. 3 (2024): 176–82, https://doi.org/10.33160/yam.2024.08.014.

[88] Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare (MHLW), "Outline of the Act on the Partial Amendment to the Child Welfare Act, etc. to Step Up Efforts to Prevent Child Abuse," Act no. 46 of 2019, https://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/policy/children/children-childrearing/dl/20191122e.pdf.

[89] Maki Umeda et al., "Childhood Adversities and Adult Use of Potentially Injurious Physical Discipline in Japan," *Journal of Family Violence* 30, no. 4 (2015): 515–27, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-015-9692-z.

[90] Krista Rogers, "Survey Reveals 70% of Japanese Adults Believe Corporal Punishment Is Necessary," *Japan Today*, January 1, 2020, https://japantoday.com/category/national/survey-reveals-70-of-japanese-adults-believe-corporal-punishment-is-necessary.

[91] Baba et al., "Factors Associated with Family Member's Spanking"; "Over 55% of Guardians in Japan Have Hit Their Children as Punishment: Survey," *Mainichi*, March 26, 2021, https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20210326/p2a/00m/0na/014000c.

[92] D. B. Bugental and J. E. Grusec, "Socialization Processes," in *Handbook of Child Psychology: Social, Emotional, and Personality Development*, 6th ed., ed. N. Eisenberg, W. Damon, and R. M. Lerner, (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2006), 366–428, https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470147658.chpsy0307.

values. Values have been described as a combination of a belief and emotions about the belief that then motivates behavior.

Group Participation: Observing and participating in a social group's routines and rituals conveys socially acceptable behavior and values, building a sense of belonging and social identity.

JWJ-QS question sets provide the general views of the sample population on the matters encompassed by the five domains, such as:

Protection: Family cohesion and conflict, sex education, and child protection

Mutual Reciprocity: Family expressiveness and helping behavior

Control: Parental discipline approaches, self-regulation, personal autonomy

Guided Learning: Religious and moral instruction, and sex education

Group Participation: Congregation support, non-parental sources of values and religious education

Discipline and Corporal Punishment

The English word "discipline" originally referred to instruction or training, as exemplified by the term "disciple." In modern times, however, dictionary definitions commonly list punishment as the primary meaning of the word. Although definitions vary, corporal punishment has been described as punishment that causes pain but does not cause significant physical injury, in contrast to physical abuse that can potentially cause serious injury.[93]

Jehovah's Witness parenting materials. Concurrent with the demand for parenting advice in Japan in the 1970s and 1980s, the 1977 Wilson study observed that "Witnesses offer a wide range of practical advice . . . on marital relations, moral issues, the rearing of children, and other practical matters."[94] Interviewees cited JW literature on family life as one of the main attractions of the religion. Philosopher and religious studies scholar Artur Artemyev stated that "in all the publications of Jehovah's Witnesses which I have studied, one similar idea is found throughout: Parents should not use rudeness or cruelty when raising their children."[95]

Publications by Jehovah's Witnesses frequently carry family-centered content that draws on both biblical references and academic sources. Materials are produced for various family roles and structures with advice for mothers, fathers, children and adolescents, step families, children of divorced parents, and so forth. Videos, including age-appropriate animations, promote prosocial attitudes, problem-solving methods, and conflict management skills.[96]

On the theme of discipline, Jehovah's Witness publications commonly emphasize training or corrective aspects more than punitive connotations. A review of the Witnesses' publications shows how discipline practices were explained over time. In general, the literature discouraged what would now be referred to as "authoritarian" or "permissive" parenting styles, recommending instead warm, firm, consistent, and communicative ("authoritative") parenting that research has demonstrated as most predictive of child well-being. For instance, a 1954 article advised: "The temperament and disposition of the individual child must be considered. Some are very sensitive, and such drastic measures as spanking may not be necessary.

[93] Lansford et al., "Trajectories of Internalizing, Externalizing, and Grades."

[94] Wilson, "Aspects of Kinship," 102.

[95] Artur Artemyev, *Jehovah's Witnesses in Kazakhstan: Socio-historical and Theological Analysis* (Artur Artemyev, 2021), 330.

[96] For examples, see sections of Jehovah's Witnesses' official website, jw.org, such as "Marriage and Family" and "Teens and Young Adults." https://www.jw.org/en/bible-teachings/family/; https://www.jw.org/en/bible-teachings/teenagers/.

Some may be so callous that such drastic measures may be ineffective."[97] While acknowledging that some parents might choose to spank their children, a 1979 article urged parents "to control themselves so that they do not let spankings lead to brutality or child abuse."[98] Over the following decades, articles suggested alternatives to corporal punishment and offered insights into reasons for child distress and misbehavior.[99]

Types and aims of discipline approaches. Even strong opponents of corporal punishment caution that research about its negative effects should not be generalized to all forms of punishment. Most experts agree that "effective parenting includes firm and consistent punishment for misbehaviors" and that permissive parenting can yield negative consequences.[100]

Responding to a child's misbehaviors usually presents any parent with several immediate and complex challenges in the domain of *control:* (1) how to stop the misbehavior and prevent recurrence, (2) how to teach why the behavior is inappropriate or harmful, and (3) how to decide if or how to impose a punishment or logical consequence to reinforce desired behavior. Likely every adult can recall a wide range in the manner, frequency, and severity of parental discipline experienced during the course of childhood. Differences may depend on the offense, the health and emotional state of child and parent, quality of parent-child relationship, family dynamics, culture, and many other factors. No wonder, then, that among the five domains enumerated above, researchers have focused most attention on the domain of control.

Besides physical punishment, other disciplinary strategies include verbal approaches (yelling, threatening), distal approaches (ignoring, isolating), behavioral approaches (added chores, withdrawal of a privilege), and instructional approaches (commendation, explanation).

As with parenting advice in general, scholarly debates continue over which types and conditions of parental punishment are harmful to children.[101] For instance, much research classifies spanking as a form of corporal punishment, whereas other scholars argue that spanking (striking with an open hand on the buttocks or extremities) should not be categorized along with more severe forms of punishment. One meta-analysis of 45 longitudinal studies found minimal evidence of negative consequences from spanking.[102]

Despite ongoing debates, all share a common concern over extreme discipline that harms children and can even lead to child abuse. Beyond the immediate effects of physical punishment are internalizing outcomes (e.g., depression, fear, distrust) and externalizing outcomes (e.g., aggression, violence, alcoholism). Parents who successfully amend poor family management practices (e.g., authoritarian style, neglect, or lack of positive encouragement) can improve outcomes for their children, similar to those for children in families with consistently positive practices.[103]

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[97] "Disciplining Children for Life," *Watchtower*, January 15, 1954, 54–55, https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1954048.

[98] "Should Children Be Spanked?" *Awake!*, May 8, 1979, 28, https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/101979330.

[99] For example, see "Parenting a Difficult Child," *Awake!,* November 22, 1994, 6–11, https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/101994842. As of 2024, 67 states worldwide fully prohibit corporal punishment. End Corporal Punishment (website), Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, accessed January 20, 2025, https://endcorporalpunishment.org/countdown/. As a matter of course, Witnesses would comply with such prohibitions, as they would all laws that do not conflict with biblical laws. For a further discussion of Witnesses and civil obedience, see Section 5 of this report.

[100] Elizabeth T. Gershoff, "Corporal Punishment by Parents and Associated Child Behaviors and Experiences: A Meta-Analytic and Theoretical Review," *Psychological Bulletin* 128, no. 4 (2002): 551, https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.128.4.539.

[101] Grusec, *Principles of Effective Parenting*.

[102] For a summary of debates, a critique of methodologies, and a meta-analysis of longitudinal studies, see Christopher J. Ferguson, "Spanking, Corporal Punishment and Negative Long-Term Outcomes: A Meta-Analytic Review of Longitudinal Studies," *Clinical Psychology Review* 33, no. 1 (February 2013): 196–208, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2012.11.002.

[103] Todd I. Herrenkohl et al., "Developmental Trajectories of Family Management and Risk for Violent Behavior in Adolescence," *Journal of Adolescent Health: Official Publication of the Society for Adolescent Medicine* 39, no. 2 (August 2006): 206–13, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2005.11.028.

Cultural influences on parental discipline approaches. Studies have found that child responses to corporal punishment can vary according to the cultural context. Although frequent discipline correlates with aggression and anxiety in adolescents, one body of research suggests that in more individualistic societies where corporal punishment is less common, children may feel unfairly singled out and view punishment as parental rejection. Where corporal punishment is culturally normative, such as in collectivist societies in which group norms are strongly valued, children may see parental discipline as intended to help them grow up responsibly.[104] Thus, parental control, including discipline, "may be more culturally variable with respect to its normativeness, meanings, and potential consequences."[105] For instance, a study comparing various ethnic groups found negative effects of harsh parenting (e.g., physical and verbal aggression) among all groups except Asian ethnicities.[106]

Besides reacting to the disciplinary act itself, children may perceive a motive behind the act. Some researchers theorize that punishment administered in a controlled manner rather than out of anger may communicate to the child that though the experience is unpleasant, the parent has the child's best interests at heart.[107] The attribute of parental warmth, along with parental affection and acceptance, is strongly associated with child well-being. A study of nine countries found that adolescents in Asia associate parental control with parental warmth, but not youths in North America and Germany.[108] Parental reasoning, accentuated by commensurate punishment, can be highly effective in avoiding repeated offenses.[109]

Discipline approaches in schools. Although Japanese law has prohibited corporal punishment in schools since 1941, "physical contact" may still be used as a method of control.[110] In years past, parents approved of teachers serving in the role of disciplinarian, including hitting and criticizing children.[111] Physical punishment in the classroom may be diminishing, but a 2020 study reported that 30% of students in extracurricular sports activities had been subject to corporal punishment.[112]

Parental discipline approaches among Jehovah's Witnesses. Little scholarly research has been done on parental discipline approaches among Jehovah's Witnesses. One study stated that "almost all Witnesses are ready to praise and explain good and bad behavior to children." The study suggested that low rates of physical punishment of children is related to the Witnesses' general position on nonviolence.[113] The religious value of nonviolence also leads many JW parents to limit their children's exposure to violent media content, which

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[104] Jennifer E. Lansford and Kenneth A. Dodge, "Cultural Norms for Adult Corporal Punishment of Children and Societal Rates of Endorsement and Use of Violence," *Parenting: Science and Practice* 8, no. 3 (2008): 257–70, https://doi.org/10.1080/15295190802204843; cf. Hitoshi Miyahara, "What Does Corporal Punishment in Schools Mean?: Trend of Case Law," *Japanese Society and Culture* 2 (2020): Article 3, https://doi.org/10.52882/2434-1738-0203.

[105] Deater-Deckard et al., "The Association Between Parental Warmth and Control in Thirteen Cultural Groups," *Journal of Family Psychology* 25, no. 5 (2011): 790–94, https://doi.org/10.1037/a0025120.

[106] Martin Pinquart, "Cultural Differences in the Association of Harsh Parenting with Internalizing and Externalizing Symptoms: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 30, no. 12 (2021): 2938–51, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-021-02113-z.

[107] Jennifer E. Lansford et al., "Physical Discipline and Children's Adjustment: Cultural Normativeness as a Moderator," *Child Development* 76, no. 6 (2005): 1234–46, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2005.00847.x.

[108] Deater-Deckard et al., "The Association between Parental Warmth and Control." However, compare with a study of African American youths that found physical discipline was linked with lower levels of behavioral problems than European American youths. Deater-Deckard et al., "Physical Discipline among African American and European American Mothers: Links to Children's Externalizing Behaviors," *Developmental Psychology* 32, no. 6 (1996): 1065–72, https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.32.6.1065.

[109] Gershoff, "Corporal Punishment by Parents."

[110] Miyahara, "What does Corporal Punishment in Schools Mean?"

[111] Aaron Miller, "*Taibatsu*: 'Corporal Punishment' in Japanese Socio-Cultural Context," *Japan Forum* 21, no. 2 (2010): 233–54, https://doi.org/10.1080/09555801003679140.

[112] Kayo Takahashi, Eiji Ozawa, and Susumu Harizuka, "Impact of Corporal Punishment on Victims' Future Violent Behavior in Extracurricular Sports," *Heliyon* 6, no. 9 (2020): Article e04903, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2020.e04903.

[113] Auyezbek and Beissembayev, *Views, Values and Beliefs*.

may translate to lower rates of adolescent aggression, hence fewer disciplinary incidents.[114]

Religious parents who are able to balance parental control with emotional support not only enjoy better parent-child relationships, but their children are more likely to accept their religious values.[115] JWJ-QS data on first- and second-generation JWs make it possible to assess whether this finding applies in JW families.

In summary, the effects of parental corporal punishment on children may be mediated by a number of factors, including the manner, intensity, and frequency of discipline, cultural context, parenting style, the parent-child relationship, and the child's perception of the parent's intent.

Parental Approaches to Religious and Moral Education

With sexual activity occurring at younger ages and reported cases of child sexual abuse in Japan on the rise, the role of parents and educators in sex education becomes more urgent. Education about sex needs to be seen in the wider context of religious and moral education.

Sex education and child protection. In a social environment where minors can easily access abundant sexual content, parents face the challenge of how and when to broach what may be an awkward topic to discuss with their children. The JWJ-QS survey sought to better understand the attitudes and experiences of Jehovah's Witnesses regarding this type of content.

Teaching about sex during Witnesses' religious meetings falls into the parenting domains of *protection* and *guided learning*. Such discussions often revolve around biblical accounts and moral principles. Jehovah's Witnesses' respect for marriage and family as arrangements created by God is connected with their teachings regarding sex and morals, with sex and procreation to be shared only within marriage. This moral context governs teaching about sex in family and congregational settings, not as something dirty or shameful, but as a gift of God to be used responsibly within certain moral bounds.

In Jehovah's Witness teaching materials, parents are encouraged to approach sex education and child abuse prevention as part of their responsibility to protect their children physically, morally, emotionally, and spiritually.[116] Candid discussions, based on moral principles, are intended to help their children avoid sexual experimentation that could lead to unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, date rape, sexual predation, and the psychological consequences of high-risk sexual behavior. Though this biblically based standard may be seen as outmoded, psychosocial research has shown certain benefits from delaying sex until marriage.[117]

JW video and textual materials suggest how to discuss these sensitive topics, including the matter of sexual predators and child sexual abuse.[118] These approaches align with advice by child protection experts, who point to the need for a stable, nurturing home environment that provides stability, consistency,

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[114] "He 'Walked with the True God'," *Watchtower*, April 2013, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/wp20130401/noah-walked-with-god/; cf. Fumie Kumagai, "Bōryoku to kyōiku" [Violence and Education], 教育社会学研究 [*The Journal of Educational Sociology*] 39 en303 (1984): 32–42, https://doi.org/10.11151/eds1951.39.32.

[115] Dollahite, "Beyond Religious Rigidities"; Fumie Kumagai, "Violence and Education." See also Stephen Armet, "Religious Socialization and Identity Formation of Adolescents in High Tension Religions," *Review of Religious Research* 50, no. 3 (2009): 277–97.

[116] "How Can Parents Teach Their Children about Sex?" Jehovah's Witnesses – Official Website, https://www.jw.org/en/bible-teachings/questions/parents-teach-children-about-sex/; "Talk to Your Children about Sex," *Watchtower*, November 1, 2010, 12–14, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/wp20101101/talk-to-your-children-about-sex/.

[117] Jesse Smith and Nicholas H. Wolfinger, "Re-Examining the Link between Premarital Sex and Divorce," *Journal of Family Issues* 45, no. 3 (2024): 674–96, https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513x231155673; S. A. Vasilenko, "Age-Varying Associations between Nonmarital Sexual Behavior and Depressive Symptoms across Adolescence and Young Adulthood," *Developmental Psychology* 53, no. 2 (2017): 366–78, https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000229.

[118] *Safeguard Your Children from Evil*, video, Jehovah's Witnesses – Official Website, https://www.jw.org/en/library/videos/#en/mediaitems/pub-lffv_502_VIDEO; "Jehovah's Witnesses Educate Parents and Children to Protect against Sexual Predators," Jehovah's Witnesses – Official Website, https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/activities/help-community/safeguarding-children-sexual-abuse/; "How to Protect Your Children," *Awake!*, October 2007, 4–8, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/g200710/protect-your-children/.

and open communication with parents as children and adolescents experience physical and emotional changes, as well as challenges such as sexual harassment and bullying.[119]

Sex education outside the home. The AIDS crisis in the late 1980s sparked the introduction of sex-related instruction in Japanese schools. However, public debates arose during the late 1990s and early 2000s over what was deemed overly explicit instruction, making educators hesitant to teach the subject. A survey of university students and their parents in Japan reported that parents tended to teach their children about physical changes related to sexuality, but they expected educational institutions to be the primary source of sex education.[120] A recent analysis shows increased usage of Japan's sexuality education curricula in schools.[121]

Parental religious education. The above discussion on sex education ties to the broader topic of parents teaching their own religious beliefs and values to their children. According to religious studies scholar Artur Artemyev, Jehovah's Witnesses "think that a family is not just a basic social unit, but an arrangement created by God."[122] In their view, parents are responsible before God for the physical, emotional, and spiritual welfare of their children, including moral and religious teaching. As children grow and mature, they become responsible for their own decisions in matters of faith, presenting Witness parents with the challenge of balancing parental responsibility with their children's personal autonomy.[123] Adolescence often brings with it a growing desire for independence. This normal developmental process allows teenagers to begin making their own decisions, taking responsibility, and forming their personal identity. In cases where independence-seeking takes the form of rebellion, often beginning around age 12 or 13, the opposition is not only directed against the authority of parents and teachers but also against society in general.[124]

"Rebellion" in Japanese culture can be understood as opposition in attitude, ignoring or avoiding parents or others, and does not necessarily refer to what one adolescent interviewee called "storming or violent behavior."[125] Skillful navigation of this period is often key to successful parental transmission of their moral or religious values to their children.

Empirical research shows that children who decide to adopt their parents' religion typically experience such conditions as a high and consistent level of parental religiosity; close parent-child relationship; clear, frequent, warm, and consistent communication of religious beliefs; absence of excessive marital conflict; and strong moral norms. Congregational life may feature shared home rituals, such as prayer before meals, and volunteer community work.[126] Extended family, particularly grandparents, can be influential in

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[119] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect," May 16, 2024, https://www.cdc.gov/child-abuse-neglect/prevention/index.html.

[120] Yaeko Takedomi et al., "Daigaku-sē hogo-sha no HIV/STD ni kansuru ishiki-chōsa" [Survey on attitudes of university parents on HIV/STD], *Nihon eizu gakkai-shi* [The Journal of AIDS Research] 5, no. 2 (2003): 76–81, https://doi.org/10.11391/aidsr1999.5.76.

[121] S. Matsumoto, "Sex Education and Sexual Behaviour of Adolescents in Japan," *Annals of the Academy of Medicine, Singapore* 24, no. 5 (September 1995): 696–99, https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/8579312/; Sinai Harel and Beverley Anne Yamamoto, "Comprehensive Horizons: Examining Japan's National and Regional Sexuality Education Curricula," *Sex Education* 25, no. 2 (2025): 290-307, https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2024.2320399.

[122] Artur Artemyev, *Jehovah's Witnesses in Kazakhstan,* 340.

[123] See "Young Ones, Are You Ready to Get Baptized?," *Watchtower,* March 2016, 3–7, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-march-2016/young-ones-ready-baptism/.

[124] S. Egami and Y. Tanaka, "Daini Hankō-ki ni taisuru ninshiki to jiga-dōitsu-sei tono kanren" [Effects of adolescent cognition about the rebellious stage on their ego identity], 愛媛大学教育学部紀要 (*Ehime daigaku kyōiku gakubu kiyō*) [Bulletin of the faculty of education, Ehime University] 60 (2013): 17–24.

[125] T. Shirai, "Seinen-ki no conflict wo oya-ko wa donoyōni taiken suruka: zenpōshi-teki saikōsei-hō wo tsukatte" [How adolescents and their parents experience their conflicts: Dealing with it using the prospective restructuring method] 青年心理学研究 (*Seinen shinri-gaku kenkyū*) [The Japanese journal of adolescent psychology] 27 (2015): 5–22; K. Hiraishi, "Seinen: Ryōshin-kankei ni okeru conflict no tayōsei to sono haikei-yōin (shirai ronbun eno comment)" [Diversity of conflicts and its background factors in parents-adolescent relationships: Comment on SHIRAI's article], 青年心理学研究 (*Seinen shinri-gaku kenkyū*) [The Japanese journal of adolescent psychology] 28 (2016): 33–37.

[126] Jesse Smith, "Transmission of Faith in Families: The Influence of Religious Ideology," *Sociology of Religion* 82, no. 3 (2020): 332–56, https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/sraa045; Richard K. Caputo, "Religious Capital and Intergenerational Transmission of Volunteering as Correlates of Civic Engagement," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 38, no. 6 (2009): 983–1002, https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764008323990.

nurturing children's spiritual interests and mentoring them in religious values.[127] A diverse congregational network, offering possibilities for intergenerational and interethnic friendships that can enrich a child's life, is an example of the domain of *group participation*.[128]

Witness parents, like other devout individuals, may earnestly hope that their children choose to follow them in the same spiritual path. As discussed in Section 2, parental religious education in the Jehovah's Witness community involves a gradual learning process that may or may not lead to a child's personal decision to be baptized.[129]

Time spent in weekly activities. Time spent together has known benefits for family units, married couples, and especially children. One recent study of Chinese families investigated the relationship between child well-being and the amount of time parents and children spent together. It observed that while families understand the need to invest resources for their children's well-being, "in practice, parents' contribution to the family is more focused on investing time in work to provide financial support to the family, with less attention to the impact of companionship and insufficient attention to children's emotional needs."[130]

With recent declines in social connections, activities involving social interaction can help counteract the deleterious effects of social isolation.[131] Sharing leisure time with friends or family or engaging in community-related activities helps individuals reduce stress and achieve a work-life balance.[132] A review of studies involving older adults found that such factors as religious volunteering and "other-oriented" motivations were associated with the most social, psychological, and physical benefits.[133]

This review summarized research on key aspects of family life, including family structures, roles, and environments. Parental views on child-rearing, discipline, and moral and religious education, as encompassed by the parenting domains of protection, mutual reciprocity, control, guided learning, and group participation, were considered in the context of culture and religion. Jehovah's Witnesses' teachings related to family life were also covered.

To what extent are the family values promoted by the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses reflected in the lives of individual Witnesses? Critics assert that the religious community of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan has endorsed and practiced harsh child discipline and coercive socialization of children in the religious tradition. Do these allegations align with the general experiences of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan, especially those who have been raised in the faith?

JWJ-QS investigators have explored these issues from both the current and retrospective aspect. The data findings below cover JW attitudes toward parental discipline approaches and teaching of religion and morals, as well as specific recollections of first- and second-generation Witnesses. For purposes of comparison, recollections about discipline and sex education in school were also collected.

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[127] Vern L. Bengtson, "The Unexpected Importance of Grandparents (and Great-Grandparents)," chap. 5 in *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down Across Generations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199948659.001.0001.

[128] Yuriy Pachovskyy and Oleg Demkiv, "The Social Capital of the Community of Jehovah's Witnesses in Modern Ukraine: Sociological Discourse," *Academic Journal of Sociology* 25, no. 2 (2019): 25–33, https://doi.org/10.21697/ucs.2019.25.2.02.

[129] See Jolene Chu and Ollimatti Peltonen, *Jehovah's Witnesses,* Series: Elements in New Religious Movements (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025), https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009375191.

[130] Dongxu Li and Xi Guo, "The Effect of the Time Parents Spend with Children on Children's Well-Being," *Frontiers in Psychology* 14 (2023): Article 1096128, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1096128.

[131] United States Department of Health and Human Services, *Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community*, 2023, Office of the U.S. Surgeon General, Washington, D.C., https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf.

[132] Andrea Gragnano, Silvia Simbula, and Massimo Miglioretti, "Work-Life Balance: Weighing the Importance of Work-Family and Work-Health Balance," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17, no. 3 (2020): Article 907, https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17030907.

[133] Beth Nichol et al., "Exploring the Effects of Volunteering on the Social, Mental, and Physical Health and Well-Being of Volunteers: An Umbrella Review," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 35 (2024): 97–128, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-023-00573-z.

Families and Household Composition

Family demographics. To better understand Jehovah's Witness families in Japan, this report examines household structures, analyzes demographics such as marital status, gender, and the socioeconomic backgrounds of parents or guardians raising minors, and assesses families' religious composition.

Household composition. A household includes all persons living in the same residence, regardless of relationship, economic status, or religion. Household composition is a key part of understanding families' needs, expectations, and dynamics. In Japan, traditional families often feature multigenerational living and prioritize collective harmony, ensuring care and continuity. Two relevant demographic trends affecting households in Japan are a rise in the number of single-person residences and a decrease in multigenerational households.

JWJ-QS respondents reported the number of individuals in their households (regardless of their relationships) across the following age groups: under 6, 6 to 12, 13 to 17, 18 to 39, 40 to 59, and 60 or older. The analysis included respondents living alone and those living with up to eight other individuals. While this study did not examine the types of relationships within households, the analysis of the distribution of age groups provided background on household composition with the presence of children and other age groups.

Table 3.1 presents the age distribution of individuals living in respondents' households. The household analysis relied on self-reported data and could not verify that only one respondent reported on each household.

Consistent with Japan's aging population and with the age distribution of the study population, the largest age group was those aged 60 or older (64.4%; *n* = 4,288), followed by individuals aged 40 to 59 (53.9%; *n* = 3,592) and 18 to 39 (32.4%; *n* = 2,157). Among minors, the highest proportion was under age 6 (14.8%; *n* = 985).

Table 3.1. Age groups of people in household units

Age group	*n*	%
Under age 6	985	14.8
6 to 12	263	3.9
13 to 17	305	4.6
18 to 39	2,157	32.4
40 to 59	3,592	53.9
60 or older	4,288	64.4

Note: *n* = 6,661. This includes household members in the corresponding age group who reported living alone or with up to eight individuals. The percentage does not add up to 100% as respondents could have reported more than one individual in their household within and across age groups.

Less than one-fifth of respondents (17.2%; *n* = 1,145) reported living in a one-person household. When analyzed by age group, 14.9% of individuals living alone were young adults (aged 18 to 39 years); 33.8% were middle-aged adults (aged 40 to 59 years); and 51.3% were older adults (aged 60 years and above).

Although the survey did not inquire about family relationships within households, those containing a wide span of age groups may indicate that they comprise multigenerational households. The study analyzed the intersection of four age groups within households: those under age 18 (which combined those under age 6, ages 6 to 12, and ages 13 to 17), young adults (ages 18 to 39), middle-aged adults (ages 40 to 59), and older adults (age 60 and over).

Respondents who reported that their households had minor children (*n* = 1,357) frequently also included members from other age groups. Specifically, 35.2% also had young adults, 63.0% included middle-aged adults, and 53.6% had older adults in their households.

Of those who reported having young adults in their households (*n* = 2,157), 45.9% reported also having middle-aged adults. Of the respondents who reported having middle-aged adults in their households (*n* = 3,592), 46.5% indicated also having older adults, while of the respondents who reported having older adults in their households (*n* = 4,288), 25.7% also had young adults.

The findings suggest a strong prevalence of multigenerational living and frequent overlap among multiple age groups within the same residence. Households in the sample population typically included members from multiple age groups, with older adults aged 60 and over having a substantial presence within the family structure.

> *Living together with an elderly grandma can be challenging, but I feel well-supported by everyone around us.*
>
> —Female, 20s, single

The family composition among the sample revealed diverse parenting situations shaped by the ages of respondents' children. While 49.9% of respondents (n = 3,593) reported having children of any age, only a small subset (7.4%; n = 533) were parents or guardians of at least one minor child (aged 17 or under).

Since the survey did not collect responses from minors, this study focused on examining the familial and social environments from parents' perspectives to identify factors that support child development. Specifically, the research assessed the family environment from the perspectives of parents or guardians responsible for rearing minors. For simplicity, the report uses "parent(s)" to refer to both parents and guardians.

Table 3.2 provides a demographic overview of the 533 parents of minor children. The majority (64.7%; n = 345) were females. The average age of parents was 48.3 years (SD = 11.23), with second-generation Jehovah's Witnesses comprising about two-thirds of the parents in the subgroup (64.7%; n = 345; *Mean* (M) = 44.0 years; SD = 6.23), and first-generation JWs comprising 28.3% (n = 151; M = 58.4 years; SD = 13.64). A substantial proportion of parents (88.7%) were married, providing minors with advantages generally associated with growing up in two-parent households. Nearly half of the parents with minors (48.8%; n = 260) reported having minors in their teens from ages 13 to 17, followed by 42.4% (n = 226) in the 6 to 12 age group, and 36.4% (n = 194) under the age of 6.

Table 3.2. Demographics of parents or guardians of minor children

Parents or guardians of minors	Total sample (n = 533)	
	n	%
Gender		
Male	188	35.3
Female	345	64.7
Marital status		
Married	473	88.7
Never married	5	0.9
Divorced or separated	38	7.1
Widowed	17	3.2
Minor age category*		
Under 6	194	36.4
Ages 6 to 12	226	42.4
Ages 13 to 17	260	48.8
JW generation		
First	151	28.3
Second	345	64.7

*Combined percentages equal more than 100% because parents could have children in multiple age groups.

The educational and employment backgrounds of parents provide insight into the support available to their dependents. Findings within the subgroup of parents with minors indicate that 99.1% had some level of formal education. Specifically, 58.7% (n = 313) had completed at least senior high school or middle school; 26.5% (n = 141) had completed junior college or a higher professional school; and 9.9% (n = 53) had graduated from college or university. (These educational attainment levels are consistent with the overall sample results reported in Section 1.)

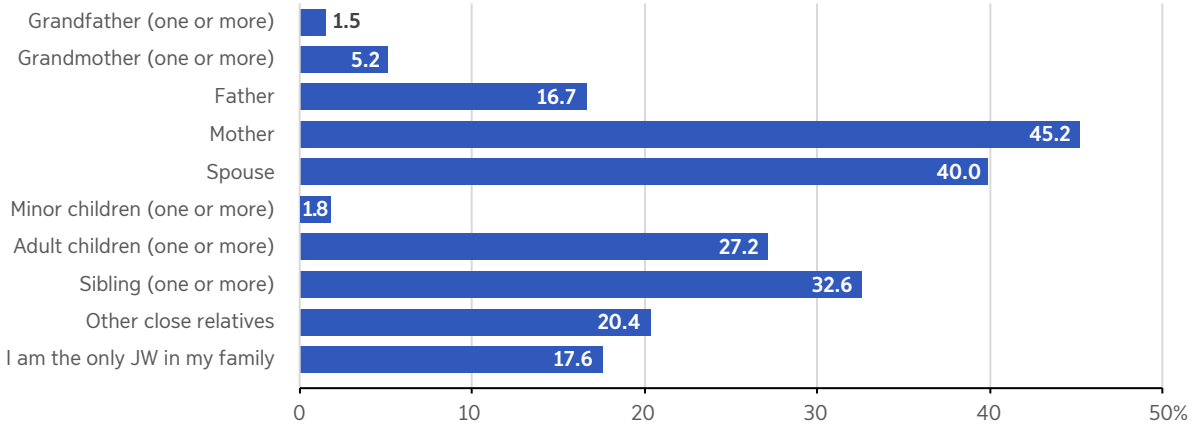
Regarding employment, 64.0% (n = 341) of parents were employed. Almost one-third of parents (31.0%; n = 165) identified as unpaid homemakers, all of whom were female, indicating a sizable proportion of stay-at-home mothers.

Religious composition of families. The number and type of relatives who share the respondents' same religious affiliation can be one indicator of how religious identity affects family members. To better assess the Witness family network, the survey asked, "Who in your family are Jehovah's Witnesses or were at the time of their death?"

Findings show that the majority (82.4%; *n* = 5,867) of respondents had at least one JW family member, while 17.6% (*n* = 1,250) reported no JW relatives. Figure 3.1 details the proportions of respondents with JW family members: 45.2% reported a JW mother; 16.7% a JW father; 5.2% a JW grandmother; and 1.5% a JW grandfather. Additionally, 40.0% of respondents reported having JW spouses, and 32.6% had at least one JW sibling.

Figure 3.1. Relatives with shared JW affiliation

Who in your family are Jehovah's Witnesses or were at the time of death?



Note: *n* = 7,117. A total of 79 respondents were excluded because of inconsistent responses (i.e., selecting that they were the only JW in the family but also selecting other responses).

Over four-fifths (82.4%) of JWs have at least one JW relative.

Over one-sixth (17.6%) of JWs do not have close JW relatives.

The Secret of Family Happiness *was the first [JW] book I studied. I was able to become closer to my unbelieving mother and sister.*

—Female, 40s, with non-JW parent and sibling

While the majority of second-generation JWs reported having several family members who shared the same religious beliefs, 32.7% of first-generation JWs were the only JWs in the family. In addition, Table 3.3 shows that 44.7% (*n* = 1,687) of first-generation Jehovah's Witnesses have adult children who adopted the faith compared with only 5.3% (*n* = 147) among second-generation JWs. This variation may be partly linked to the age differences between generations, with older adults in the first generation who would have more adult children. A higher proportion of second-generation respondents (94.5%; *n* = 2,638) reported having JW mothers compared with 2.4% of the first generation (*n* = 89). Second-generation JWs also reported having more JW siblings (61.3%; *n* = 1,712) compared with 9.1% of the first generation (*n* = 344), and more JW fathers (36.9%; *n* = 1,031) compared with 0.4% of the first generation (*n* = 16).

These results suggest the prevalence of faith transmission between family members, with the likely influence of parents, and possibly grandparents, on younger generations. The finding is consistent with published results on intergenerational religious transmission.

Family profile composition among JWs indicated a diversity of marital statuses and parenting roles, with a subset who are raising minor children. The respondents reported intergenerational connections and religious diversity within the family that could influence family dynamics and functioning.

Table 3.3. Relatives with shared affiliation, first- and second-generation JWs

Who in your family are Jehovah's Witnesses or were at the time of death? (Select all that apply.)	First generation (*n* = 3,778)		Second generation (*n* = 2,793)	
	n	%	*n*	%
Grandfather (one or more)	8	0.2	89	3.2
Grandmother (one or more)	19	0.5	305	10.9
Father	16	0.4	1,031	36.9
Mother	89	2.4	2,638	94.5
Spouse	1,358	35.9	1,255	44.9
Minor children (one or more)	31	0.8	94	3.4
Adult children (one or more)	1,687	44.7	147	5.3
Sibling (one or more)	344	9.1	1,712	61.3
Other close relatives	439	11.6	876	31.4
I am the only one in my family who is one of Jehovah's Witnesses.	1,237	32.7	8	0.3

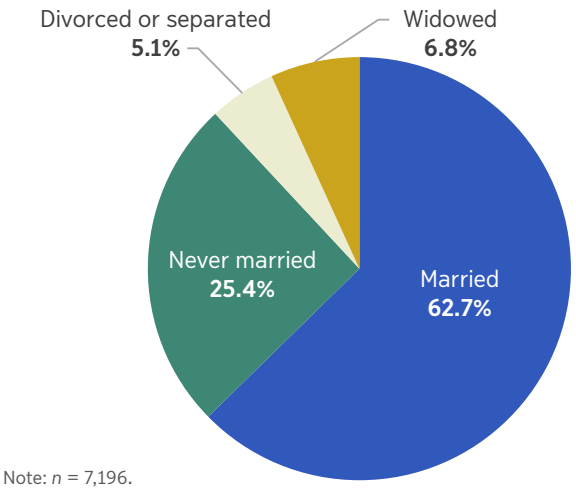
Marital Status and Commitment, Views of Divorce, and Marital Happiness

Several analyses were conducted focusing on marital status, gender-based comparisons, generational differences, marital commitment levels, views of divorce, and determinants of marital happiness. By examining these factors, the research aimed to enhance understanding of how religious affiliation, gender, and generational status within the Jehovah's Witness community are associated with marital relationships.

Marital status. As Figure 3.2 highlights, 62.7% (*n* = 4,511; combining "married," *n* = 4,458, and "common-law marriage,"* *n* = 53) of Jehovah's Witnesses in the sample were married. One-fourth (25.4%; *n* = 1,827) had never been married, and 6.8% (*n* = 490) were widowed. Among the never-married respondents, 68.5% were female (*n* = 1,251) and 31.5% were male (*n* = 576). A smaller subset, 5.1% (*n* = 368), reported being either divorced (*n* = 328) or separated (*n* = 40). Fewer females were married (60.0%) compared with males (69.3%), while a higher proportion of females were divorced or separated (6.7% compared with 1.3% of males) or widowed (8.9% compared with 1.8% of males).

*Based on JW teaching on compliance with civil law, married congregants are required to have their marital union legally recognized.

Figure 3.2. Marital status



Note: *n* = 7,196.

Religious characteristics of married couples, JW and non-JW spouses. Close to two-thirds of married respondents were in same-faith marriages. As shown in Table 3.4, 64.5% (*n* = 2,910) of married couples had a JW spouse. Of these, 7.9% (*n* = 358) had minor children. Of the 35.3% (*n* = 1,593) who reported having a non-JW spouse, 2.5% (*n* = 113) had minor children.

The majority of males (97.9%; *n* = 1,414) reported having a JW spouse compared with about half of females (48.8%; *n* = 1,496). Non-JW spouses were more common among female respondents (51.1%; *n* = 1,566), showing a higher incidence of mixed-belief marriages among female JWs.

Table 3.4. Married with minor children by gender and JW affiliation

Married group	Male (*n* = 1,444)		Female (*n* = 3,067)		Total (*n* = 4,511)	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Have JW spouse	1,414	97.9	1,496	48.8	2,910	64.5
With minor children	179	12.4	179	5.8	358	7.9
Have non-JW spouse	27	1.9	1,566	51.1	1,593	35.3
With minor children	3	0.2	110	3.6	113	2.5

Note: Eight respondents did not report if his/her spouse was one of JWs.

The proportion of married respondents with JW spouses varied by JW generations. Almost half of first-generation respondents (48.1%; *n* = 1,341) reported having a JW spouse compared with 93.2% (*n* = 1,322) of the second generation. This nearly twofold increase between the generations shows increased religious homogeneity in marital unions within the community over time. A higher prevalence of mixed-belief marriages was noted among first-generation female JWs, who were more likely to have adopted the faith after being married.

Marital commitment. Marital commitment strongly predicts relationship longevity and satisfaction. To measure the level of marital commitment among JWs in Japan, the seven-item Investment Model Scale was used.[134] The instrument uses a five-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree to measure respondents' commitment level, or intent to persist, in the marital relationship. Negative statements were reverse coded for a positive cumulative score (ranging from 7 to 35) for each respondent, with higher scores indicating a more substantial commitment to marriage. Percentages are calculated based on the total number of respondents in each group, but mean scores exclude prefer not to answer" (PNA) responses. In the survey, the term "spouse" was used instead of "partner" to assess the commitment among married couples only.

[134] Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew, "The Investment Model Scale."

A high level of commitment was reported among the married cohort (n = 4,204; M = 32.1; SD = 4.03), with over 94% agreeing with the statements: "I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my spouse" and "I am committed to a long-term relationship with my spouse." Only a small fraction (2.3%) strongly disagreed with the statement: "I feel very attached to our relationship—very strongly linked to my spouse."

> *Our efforts to apply Bible teachings as a couple have strengthened our bond, making us realize how much we need each other. We have been married for 52 years.*
>
> —Male, 80s, married to JW spouse

Subgroup analysis of marital commitment was done by gender, age group, same or mixed JW affiliation, and parents of minor children, with the following results: Both males and females reported a high level of marital commitment, with a slightly higher score for males (n = 1,370; M = 33.2; SD = 2.90) than females (n = 2,834; M = 31.5; SD = 4.36). Among age groups, young adults (n = 289; M = 33.8; SD = 2.37) and middle-aged adults (n = 1,556; M = 33.1; SD = 3.61) reported higher marital commitment scores compared with older adults (n = 2,359; M = 31.2; SD = 4.21).

Among same- or mixed-belief marriages, the marital commitment score, though relatively high for both groups, was higher for those with JW spouses (n = 2,748; M = 33.2; SD = 3.00) than for those with non-JW spouses (n = 1,452; M = 29.9; SD = 4.74). Loyalty to the spouse was underscored in both groups equally, with more than 99% disagreeing with the likelihood they would date someone other than their spouse within the next year.

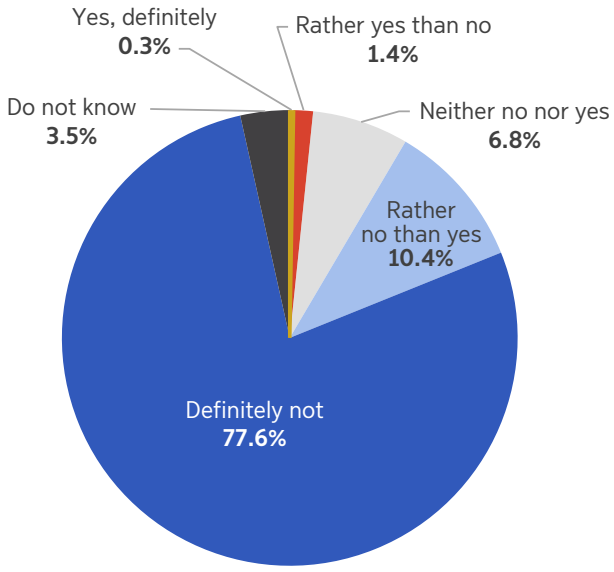
Parents or guardians of minor children reported high levels of marital commitment to their spouses (n = 440; M = 32.4; SD = 4.19), similar to the total married sample (n = 4,204; M = 32.1; SD = 4.03) with 94.1% committed for the long term.

Religious differences not a reason for divorce. To assess if respondents believe that religious differences in couples would be an acceptable reason for divorce, the survey asked, "If one spouse is one of Jehovah's Witnesses and the other spouse does not share his or her beliefs, in your opinion, is that an acceptable reason for a divorce?" Respondents answered on a five-point scale ranging from "definitely yes" to "definitely not." A "do not know" option was included.

As shown in Figure 3.3, the majority, 88.0% of the total sample (77.6% choosing "definitely not" and 10.4% "rather no than yes"), responded that religious differences with a spouse would not be an acceptable reason to divorce. Those with a JW spouse (89.5%) and those with a non-JW spouse (85.9%) answered similarly, as did parents of minor children (85.4%).

Figure 3.3. View of divorce over religious differences

If one spouse is one of Jehovah's Witnesses and the other spouse does not share his or her beliefs, in your opinion, is that an acceptable reason for a divorce?



Note: n = 7,196.

Over three-fourths of Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe that having religious differences is an acceptable reason to divorce.

Factors of a happy marriage. To assess factors that respondents consider important for a happy marriage, they were asked to rate 13 items on a four-point scale ranging from "very important" to "not at all important." A "do not know" option was included.

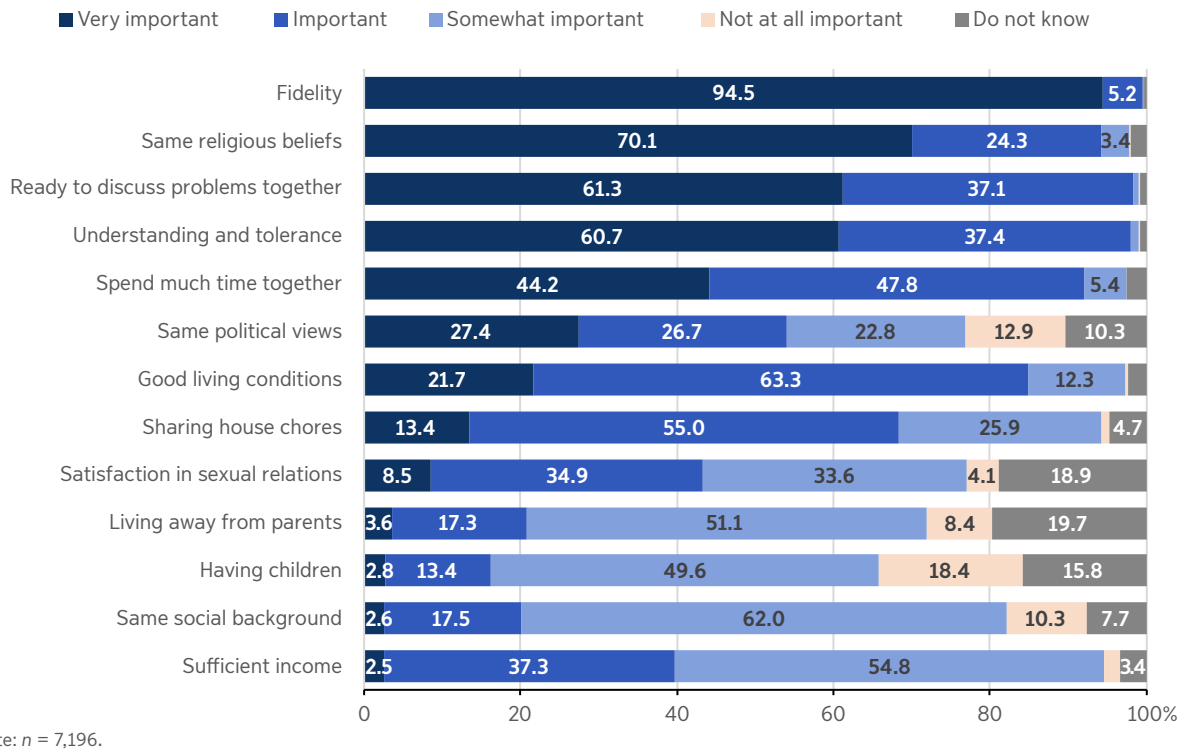
As Figure 3.4 shows, all listed items were rated "important." "Fidelity," the top priority, rated as "very important" (94.5%). Four items related to compatibility and communication were also top choices: "same religious beliefs" (70.1%), "being ready to discuss problems together" (61.3%), "understanding and tolerance" (60.7%), and "spending as much time together as possible" (44.2%).

> *Bible teachings have also helped me to put the well-being of my family above my own desires.*
>
> —Male, 40s, married with children

Recognizing the relative importance of having adequate finances, about half of respondents (54.8%) viewed "sufficient income" as "somewhat important." "Same political views" drew some responses at both extremes, with "very important" at 27.4% and "not at all important" at 12.9%. Ratings of "not at all important" were given for "having children" (18.4%), "same social background" (10.3%), and "living away from parents" (8.4%). Items with the highest "do not know" responses were "same political views" (10.3%), "satisfaction in sexual relations" (18.9%), "living away from parents" (19.7%), "having children" (15.8%), and "same social background" (7.7%). The substantial proportion of "do not know" responses in these instances may suggest respondents' limited experience with, relevance to, or familiarity with the situations presented.

Figure 3.4. View of factors for a happy marriage

The following is a list of things that people see are important for a happy marriage. How important do you think each is?



Note: *n* = 7,196.

Table 3.5 shows that both JW generations exhibit similar patterns in prioritizing reasons for a happy marriage, comparable to the total sample. Differences between generations emerged primarily around "having children" and "living away from parents." "Having children" was important but to a lesser extent for the second generation (58.1%) than for the first generation (72.1%), while "living away from parents" was of higher importance for the second generation (77.3%) compared with the first generation (68.1%). "Having children" drew 27.4% of "not at all important" responses among the second generation, possibly reflecting priorities of those who are not married or do not have children.

Of particular interest was the high value placed on sharing household chores by both generational groups, with 93.4% of first-generation respondents and 95.4% of second-generation respondents identifying it as important. Further analysis conducted on the total sample revealed that this factor is considered important by 96.1% of males and 93.6% of females, indicating that males consider sharing household chores as an important factor for a happy marriage.

Table 3.5. View of factors for a happy marriage by JW generations

Important factors for a happy marriage	First generation (n = 3,847)			Second generation (n = 2,799)		
	Important	Not at all important	Do not know	Important	Not at all important	Do not know
Fidelity	99.7%	0.0%	0.3%	99.6%	0.0%	0.4%
Sufficient income	94.3	1.6	4.1	94.8	2.8	2.4
Same social background	83.2	7.5	9.3	80.5	13.9	5.6
Same religious beliefs	96.9	0.3	2.8	99.0	0.1	0.8
Good living conditions	97.1	0.3	2.6	97.7	0.5	1.8
Same political views	76.8	12.5	10.7	76.8	13.6	9.5
Understanding and tolerance	99.1	0.1	0.9	99.3	0.0	0.7
Living away from parents	68.1	8.4	23.5	77.3	8.6	14.1
Satisfying sexual relations	76.1	5.4	18.6	78.7	2.4	18.9
Sharing house chores	93.4	1.2	5.4	95.4	0.7	3.9
Having children	72.1	11.5	16.4	58.1	27.4	14.6
Ready to discuss problems together	99.0	0.0	1.0	99.3	0.0	0.7
Spend much time together	96.9	0.1	3.0	98.2	0.1	1.7

Note: "Important" proportions combine "very important," "important," and "somewhat important" responses.

Family Functioning and Satisfaction

The family environment plays a fundamental role in childhood socialization and individual well-being. This study examined the family environment among Jehovah's Witnesses using two metrics: a single-item family satisfaction scale and the Brief Family Relationship Scale (BFRS), a validated measure of family functioning.[135] The BFRS

[135] Fok et al., "The Brief Family Relationship Scale."

consists of 16 items rated on a five-point strongly disagree–strongly agree scale, resulting in a cumulative score ranging from 16 to 80. Higher scores generally indicate more positive family functioning (although extremely high scores can be indicative of overly enmeshed family environments). An additional "prefer not to answer" choice was added but excluded from the total score calculation. Percentages are calculated based on the total number of respondents in each group, but mean scores exclude PNA responses. The measure consisted of three dimensions related to family functioning: cohesion (with seven items), expressiveness (with three items), and conflict (with six items).

For the total sample, the cumulative family functioning mean score was 67.1 (n = 6,824; SD = 9.44). Key findings from analysis by subscale include the following.

Cohesion, expressiveness, and conflict. With a range from 7 to 35, the mean score for the total sample on the cohesion subscale was 30.1 (SD = 4.78), indicating a high and balanced degree of cohesion. Over 90% of respondents agreed with the statement: "In our family we really help and support each other." Approximately three-fourths agreed with the statements: "In our family there is a feeling of togetherness" and "In our family we spend a lot of time doing things together" (76.8% and 74.6%, respectively).

> *I have come to realize how important it is for adults to own up to their flaws and to sincerely apologize without hesitation.*
>
> —Female, 60s, divorced with children

Scores on the three expressiveness subscale items ranged from 3 to 15. A high degree of openness was reported (M = 12.7; SD = 2.46). Over 80% agreed with each of the three items related to expressiveness, including "talk openly" and "tell each other about our personal problems."

Six items comprised the conflict subscale, with reverse-coded scores ranging from 6 to 30 to reflect a non-conflict score. A higher score indicates a lower degree of reported conflict in the family.

Overall, the results indicate a low-conflict family environment (M = 24.3; SD = 4.37). The following statements prompted high rates of disagreement: "Family members sometimes are violent" (93.4% disagreed); "In our family, we raise our voice when we are mad" (83.1% disagreed); and "In our family, we often put down each other" (82.5% disagreed).

Slightly less than one-third of respondents indicated that their families were characterized by anger. A small percentage (3.0%) agreed that "My family members sometimes are violent." Although most Jehovah's Witnesses reported expressiveness and cohesiveness in their family life, some respondents indicated that they contended with troubling family situations.

> *I think there is a breakdown in communication, and sometimes I feel there are misunderstandings or miscommunications.*
>
> —Male, 30s, single

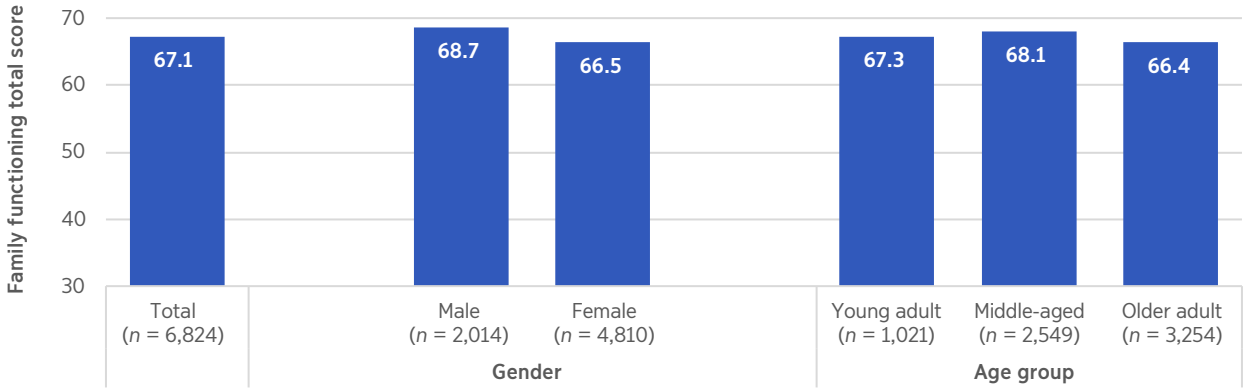
> *Due to my own upbringing, I have faced challenges in communicating with my family. This has remained unchanged even after I became one of Jehovah's Witnesses. . . . I strongly feel the need to listen actively to my daughter's sensitive feelings.*
>
> —Female, 60s, first-generation JW

A breakdown by different groups provides additional insights into family functioning among the study population.

Comparable high scores of family functioning were reported across gender and age groups. As Figure 3.5 shows, males reported a slightly higher family functioning score (n = 2,014; M = 68.7; SD = 8.71) compared with females (n = 4,810; M = 66.5; SD = 9.66).

Similarly, family functioning was consistent across age groups with small variances: young adults (n = 1,021; M = 67.3; SD = 9.20) and older adults (n = 3,254; M = 66.4; SD = 9.48) reported slightly lower scores compared with middle-aged adults (n = 2,549; M = 68.1; SD = 9.40).

Figure 3.5. Family functioning by gender and age groups

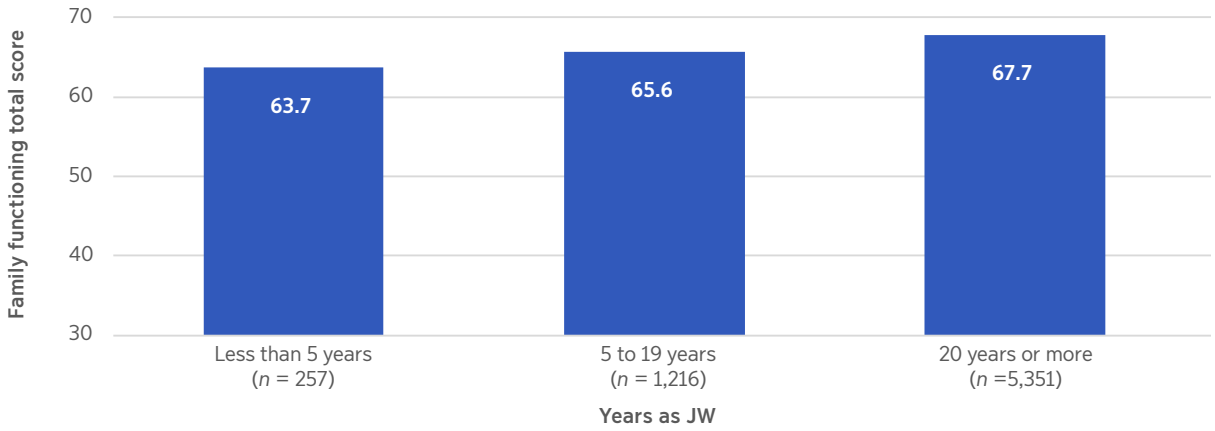


Note: Respondents reporting PNA for any items of family functioning assessment were excluded from the calculation of the means.

The analysis investigated whether family functioning differed depending on the time spent in the religion. Three subgroups of the total sample were constructed based on respondents' year of baptism. The groups were as follows: baptized less than 5 years, 5 to 19 years, and 20 years or more. The highest proportion of respondents (78.6%; n = 5,658) were among those baptized 20 years or more, followed by 5 to 19 years (17.6%, n = 1,266) and less than 5 years (3.8%; n = 272).

Figure 3.6 shows the mean scores with the adjusted sample sizes after PNA responses were excluded in each of the JW years groups. The analyses indicated that family functioning scores increased with the number of years spent in the religion. Specifically, those who were in the religion for 20 years or more (n = 5,351; M = 67.7; SD = 9.19) reported the highest family functioning score compared with those in the religion for 5 to 19 years (n = 1,216; M = 65.6; SD = 9.98) and those for less than 5 years (n = 257; M = 63.7; SD = 10.41). A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed a statistically significant difference among the three groups [$F(2, 6{,}821) = 42.46$; $p < 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.01$]. Post-hoc Welch's t-tests showed that those in the religion for 20 years or more had significantly higher family functioning mean scores than both the

Figure 3.6. Family functioning by years as JW



Note: Mean scores did not include PNA responses.

5 to 19 years group [$t(1,715) = 6.73$; $p < 0.001$; Cohen's d (d) = 0.23] and the less than 5 years group [$t(276) = 5.93$; $p < 0.001$; $d = 0.42$]. The increase was also significant when comparing the 5 to 19 years group to the less than 5 years group [$t(362) = 2.57$; $p = 0.01$; $d = 0.18$]. All p values remained significant after correcting for multiple comparisons with Bonferroni. This would seem to indicate that there might be a strong positive relationship between family functioning and years spent in the religion.

As to marital statuses, the results suggest a higher overall family functioning score for married respondents (n = 4,342; M = 68.2; SD = 9.09) compared with those widowed (n = 448; M = 67.0; SD = 9.53), those who never married (n = 1,711; M = 65.1; SD = 9.73), and those divorced or separated (n = 323; M = 64.3; SD = 10.04).

According to Table 3.6, individuals in both mixed-belief and same-faith marriages reported high family functioning scores. However, those married to a JW spouse reported a higher level of family functioning (n = 2,823; M = 70.5; SD = 7.92) than those married to a non-JW spouse (n = 1,514; M = 64.0; SD = 9.58).

Table 3.6. Family functioning, households with JW and non-JW spouse

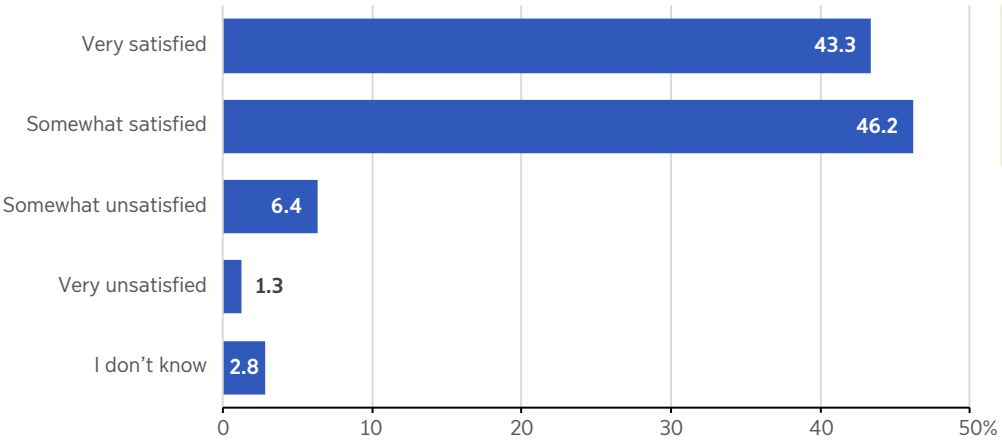
Family functioning score	JW spouse (n = 2,823)		Non-JW spouse (n = 1,514)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Total (range from 16 to 80)	70.5	7.92	64.0	9.58
Cohesion (range from 7 to 35)	32.0	3.59	28.5	4.69
Expressiveness (range from 3 to 15)	13.7	1.76	11.9	2.55
Conflict (range from 6 to 30)	24.8	4.20	23.7	4.34

Overall, while both first and second JW generations reported high family functioning scores, the second-generation score (n = 2,728; M = 68.6; SD = 9.04) exceeded the first-generation score (n = 3,588; M = 65.9; SD = 9.53). Analysis of two specific subscales provided more insights. On the cohesion subscale, second-generation JWs reported slightly higher scores (M = 30.9; SD = 4.35) than first-generation JWs (M = 29.3; SD = 4.97). Similarly, on the expressiveness subscale, the second-generation cohort reported slightly higher scores (M = 13.3; SD = 2.20) compared with the first generation (M = 12.3; SD = 2.57). Parents with minor children reported a similarly high family functioning score (n = 514; M = 67.9; SD = 9.13) consistent with the total sample (M = 67.1; SD = 9.44).

Family satisfaction. A single-item four-point scale inquired, "How satisfied are you with your family life?" Response options were "very satisfied," "somewhat satisfied," "somewhat unsatisfied," and "very unsatisfied." An "I don't know" response option was also provided. Percentages are calculated using the total number of respondents within each group; however, mean scores excluded those who answered, "I don't know," leading to different sample sizes depending on the method. As shown in Figures 3.8 to 3.11, percentages in the charts reflect the overall respondent sample size for each group, while the sample size of the means reported in text excluded "I don't know" responses. As shown in Figure 3.7, the majority of JWs (89.5%) indicated satisfaction with their family life, with 43.3% reporting "very satisfied" and 46.2% "somewhat satisfied." Smaller percentages reported "somewhat unsatisfied" (6.4%) or "very unsatisfied" (1.3%). Excluding "I don't know" respondents, the reversed mean score for the total sample was 3.4 (n = 6,993; SD = 0.66), placing the population between the "somewhat satisfied" and "very satisfied" scaled metric.

Figure 3.7. Satisfaction with family life

How satisfied are you with your family life?



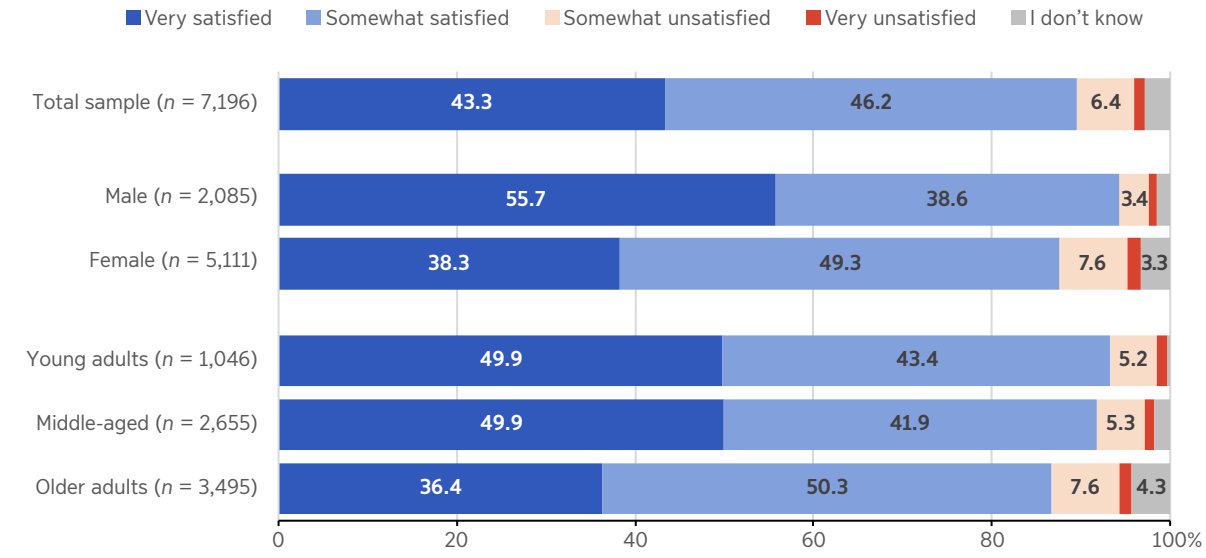
Almost 90% of Jehovah's Witnesses are satisfied with their family life.

Note: *n* = 7,196.

As Figure 3.8 illustrates, both genders reported being satisfied with their family life (males: *n* = 2,053; *M* = 3.5; *SD* = 0.61; females: *n* = 4,940; *M* = 3.3; *SD* = 0.67), with 94.3% of males and 87.6% of females expressing satisfaction (combining "very satisfied" and "somewhat satisfied" responses).

Across age groups, 49.9% of young adults (*n* = 1,042; *M* = 3.4; *SD* = 0.65) and 49.9% of middle-aged adults (*n* = 2,608; *M* = 3.4; *SD* = 0.65) reported being "very satisfied" with their family compared with 36.4% of older adults (*n* = 3,343; *M* = 3.3; *SD* = 0.67).

Figure 3.8. Family satisfaction by gender and age group

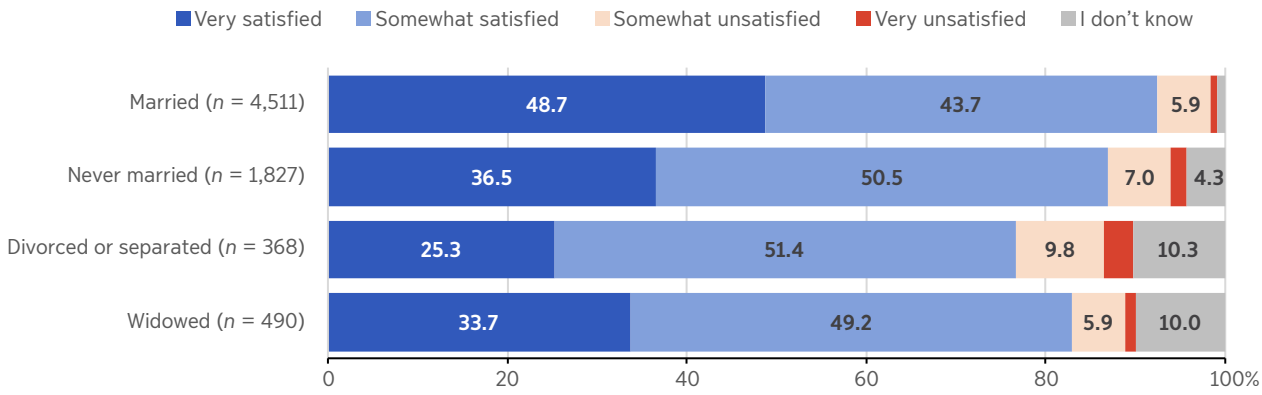


Respondents who have been Jehovah's Witnesses for 20 years or more reported the highest rate of family satisfaction (90.1%), followed closely by those with 5 to 19 years of affiliation (88.0%) and those with less than 5 years in the faith (85.7%), based on the combined percentages of "very satisfied" and "somewhat satisfied" responses. A one-way ANOVA indicated a statistically significant difference in mean family satisfaction scores across these groups [$F(2, 6{,}990) = 10.00$; $p < 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.003$]. Post hoc Welch's t-tests further revealed that respondents who have been Jehovah's Witnesses for 20 years or more had significantly higher family satisfaction ($n = 5{,}486$; $M = 3.4$; $SD = 0.65$) compared with those with 5 to 19 years [$n = 1{,}242$; $M = 3.3$; $SD = 0.71$; $t(1{,}736) = 3.19$; $p = 0.001$; $d = 0.11$] and those with less than 5 years [$n = 265$; $M = 3.2$; $SD = 0.72$; $t(285) = 2.99$; $p = 0.003$; $d = 0.21$] in the faith. All p values remained significant after correcting for multiple comparisons with Bonferroni. No other significant comparison was found.

Family satisfaction varied depending on marital status. As shown in Figure 3.9, combining "very satisfied" and "somewhat satisfied, 92.4% of the "married" respondents reported being satisfied with family life ($n = 4{,}474$; $M = 3.4$; $SD = 0.64$) compared with all other marital statuses: 87.0% of those "never married" ($n = 1{,}748$; $M = 3.3$; $SD = 0.67$); 82.9% of those "widowed" ($n = 441$; $M = 3.3$; $SD = 0.65$); and 76.7% of those divorced or separated ($n = 330$; $M = 3.1$; $SD = 0.73$). Two groups selected the "I don't know" option more frequently: those divorced or separated (10.3%) and those "widowed" (10.0%).

> *I regret not being more affectionate with my children, as I was often preoccupied with the daily responsibilities of being a single parent.*
>
> —Female, 70s, divorced with children

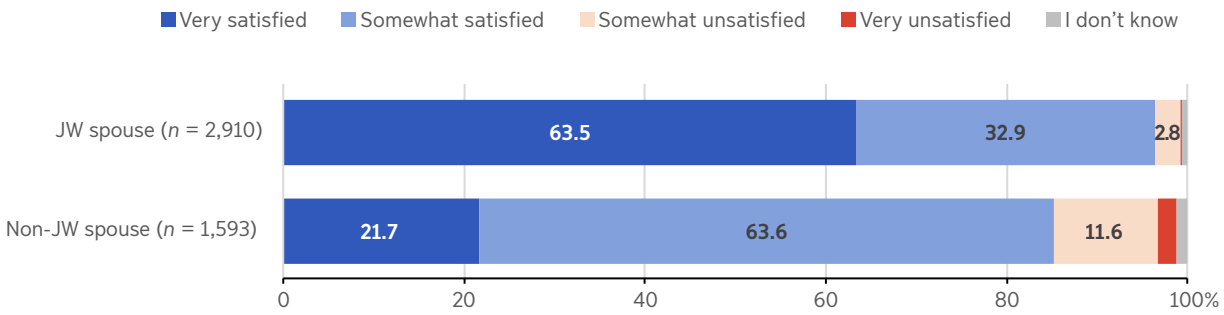
Figure 3.9. Family satisfaction by marital status



Both those in mixed-belief and same-faith marriages reported being relatively satisfied with their family life, although the percentages were higher for those married to a JW spouse (n = 2,894; M = 3.6; SD = 0.56) than those with a non-JW spouse (n = 1,574; M = 3.1; SD = 0.64). As shown in Figure 3.10, 96.4% of those with a JW spouse reported being satisfied with their family life (63.5% "very satisfied" and 32.9% "somewhat satisfied") compared with 85.3% of those with a non-JW spouse (21.7% "very satisfied" and 63.6% "somewhat satisfied"). Another 11.6% of those who have a non-JW spouse reported "somewhat unsatisfied."

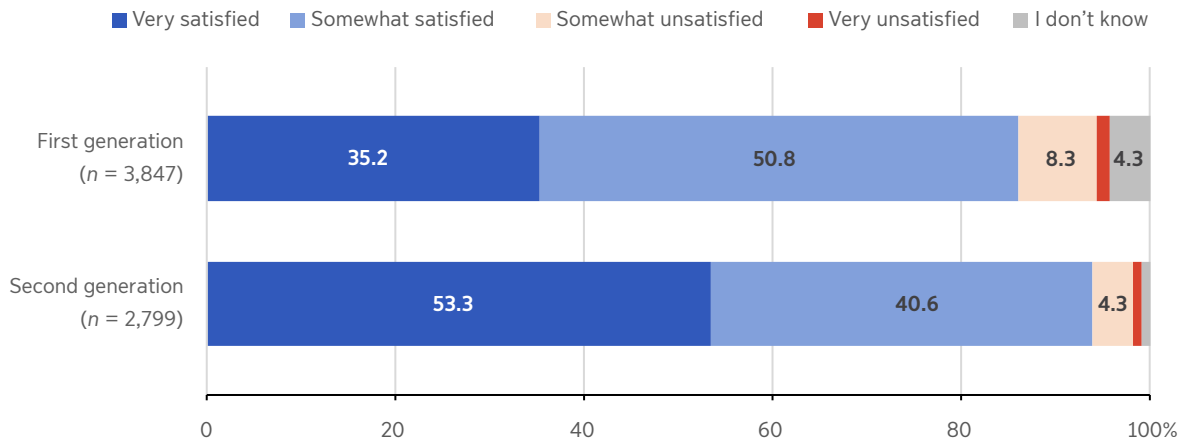
> *Though my husband is an unbeliever, he kindly and fully understands that I am proud of my lifestyle. With a positive view on Bible teachings, he acknowledges that they bring happiness to our family and credits them for our children's good behavior.*
>
> —Female, 40s, married to non-JW spouse

Figure 3.10. Family satisfaction: JW and non-JW spouse



The study assessed family satisfaction among first- and second-generation Jehovah's Witnesses. As shown in Figure 3.11, 93.9% of second-generation JWs (n = 2,775; M = 3.5; SD = 0.63) reported being satisfied with their family life compared with 86.0% of first-generation JWs (n = 3,681; M = 3.3; SD = 0.67). Among parents or guardians of minor children (n = 527; M = 3.4; SD = 0.65), 91.4% of parents reported being satisfied with family life.

Figure 3.11. Family satisfaction: First- and second-generation JWs



Parental Teaching and Socialization of Children

Another aspect of family life involves the parental approach to child-rearing. The JWJ-QS study assessed current approaches, attitudes, and behaviors related to child-rearing among Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan, focusing specifically on parents or guardians of minors.

This section addresses the concept of discipline through three key dimensions: (1) the meaning of discipline as understood by respondents, (2) the methods employed by parents and schools as recalled by their adult children, and (3) the discipline methods deemed acceptable by respondents currently. Together, these facets provide a view of how discipline is defined, experienced, and applied within JW families. The survey also inquired about recollections of discipline at school to obtain a historical reference to societal norms outside the family.

Meaning of "discipline." Some may use the term "discipline" synonymously with corporal punishment. To understand how JWs understood the meaning of "discipline," the survey asked respondents to select up to three out of five terms that they believed best applied to the word "discipline." As shown in Figure 3.12, "instruct" (91.8%) and "correct" (90.6%) were similarly selected, followed by "train" (83.8%). Only 2.2% of the respondents connected "discipline" to "physically punish" and less than one percent to "demean."

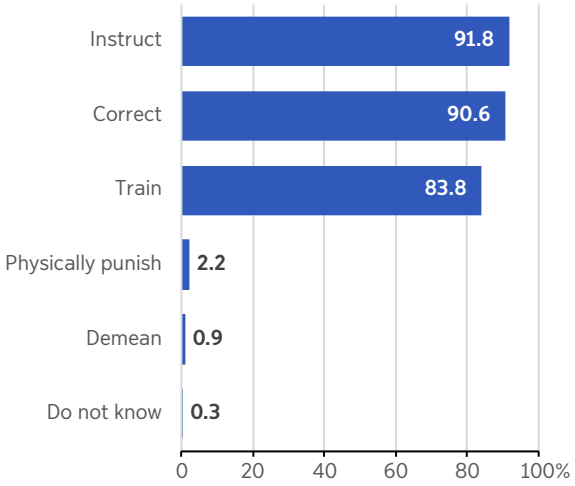
Parenting content in religious publications and meetings. The survey asked, "To what extent do you think Jehovah's Witnesses' publications and meetings encourage or discourage parents in the following ways?" With 12 items related to parenting, child training, and discipline, respondents rated their opinion on a five-point scale ranging from "strongly encourage" to "strongly discourage," in addition to "do not know" and "prefer not to answer" options. The ratings on most items showed a general consensus among respondents.

As Figure 3.13 shows, combining "strongly encourage" and "somewhat encourage" responses, 97.5% responded that Jehovah's Witnesses' publications and meetings encouraged parents to "set a good example for child(ren) in forgiveness and having self-control." Respondents indicated that religious teaching encouraged parents to "make time for recreational activities with children" (97.1%) and to "make time for religious activities with children" (95.6%). Respondents felt that JW meetings and publications also encouraged parents to "let children know they are loved even when they make mistakes" (96.9%) and to "allow children to express their point of view" (93.0%).

> *I actually do not care what is being criticized in the media today. My parents trained me with my well-being in mind to the best of their abilities despite their imperfections. I believe the training was necessary for me to build good relationships as an adult.*
>
> —Female, 40s, second-generation JW

Figure 3.12. Meaning of discipline

Which of the following words do you think best apply to the term "discipline"?



Note: *n* = 7,184. A total of 12 respondents did not answer the question.

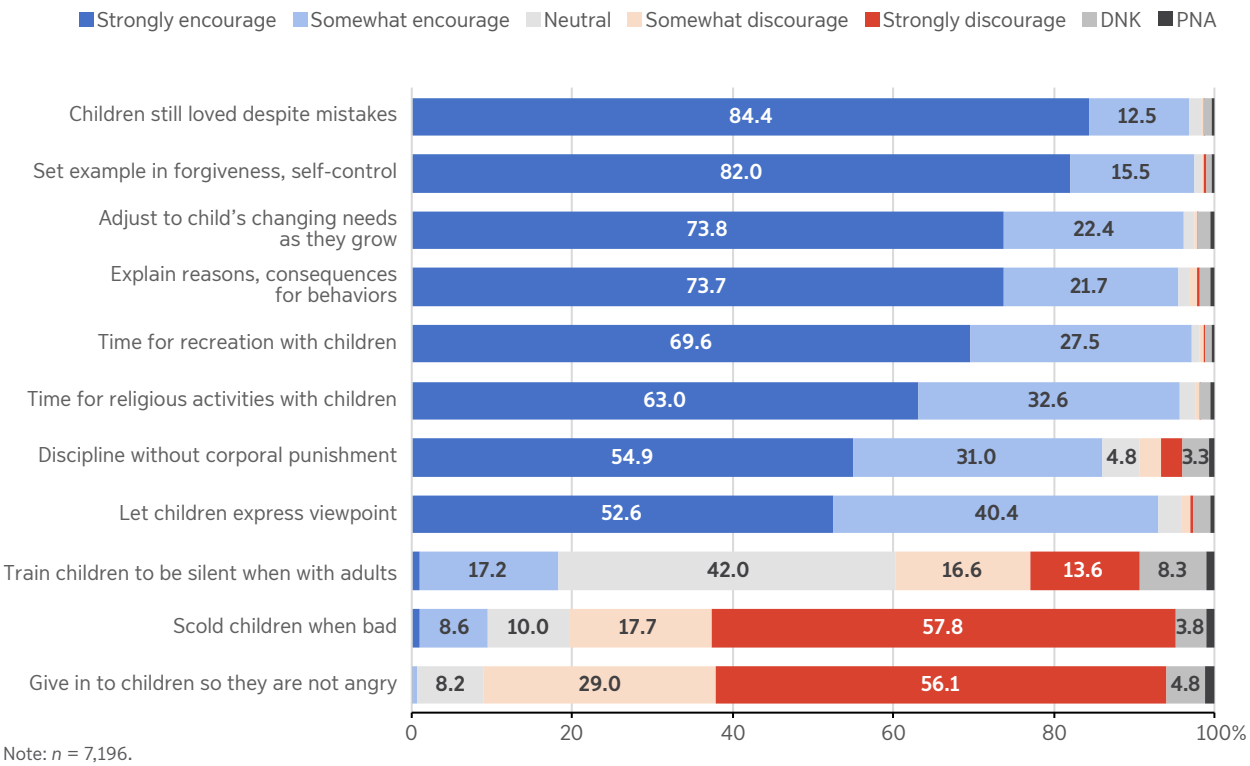
The respondents indicated that JW meetings and publications encouraged parents to "adjust to the changing needs of children as they grow older" (96.2%), to "discipline in ways other than corporal punishment" (85.9%), and to "explain reasons and consequences for behaviors" (95.4%). Most respondents indicated that JW religious content did not encourage parents (combining "strongly discourage" and "somewhat discourage" responses) to "scold children when they do something bad" (75.5%) or to "give children what they want so they do not become angry" (85.1%). Another 10.0% and 8.2% on the last two items, respectively, were neutral.

"Train children to be silent in the presence of adults" drew neutral responses from 42.0% of respondents, with 18.4% of respondents indicating that JW publications and meetings did encourage this behavior, while another 30.2% thought this was discouraged.

The view of JW content was similar for respondents who were parents of minors and for the total JW sample.

Figure 3.13. Parenting content in JW sources

To what extent do you think Jehovah's Witnesses' publications and meetings encourage or discourage parents in the following ways?



Note: *n* = 7,196.

Recalled parental approaches to discipline. Inquiring about the four types of parents (JW father, JW mother, non-JW father, non-JW mother), the survey asked respondents, "How often do you remember your [parent] doing the following when you were a child?" Respondents rated frequency on a seven-point scale from "never" to "very often" for various disciplining methods, such as shouting, making threats, ignoring, assigning chores, hitting, commending, and explaining behavior. Options included a "does not apply" (DNA) response to account for lack of relevance or context, as well as ″prefer not to answer″ (PNA).

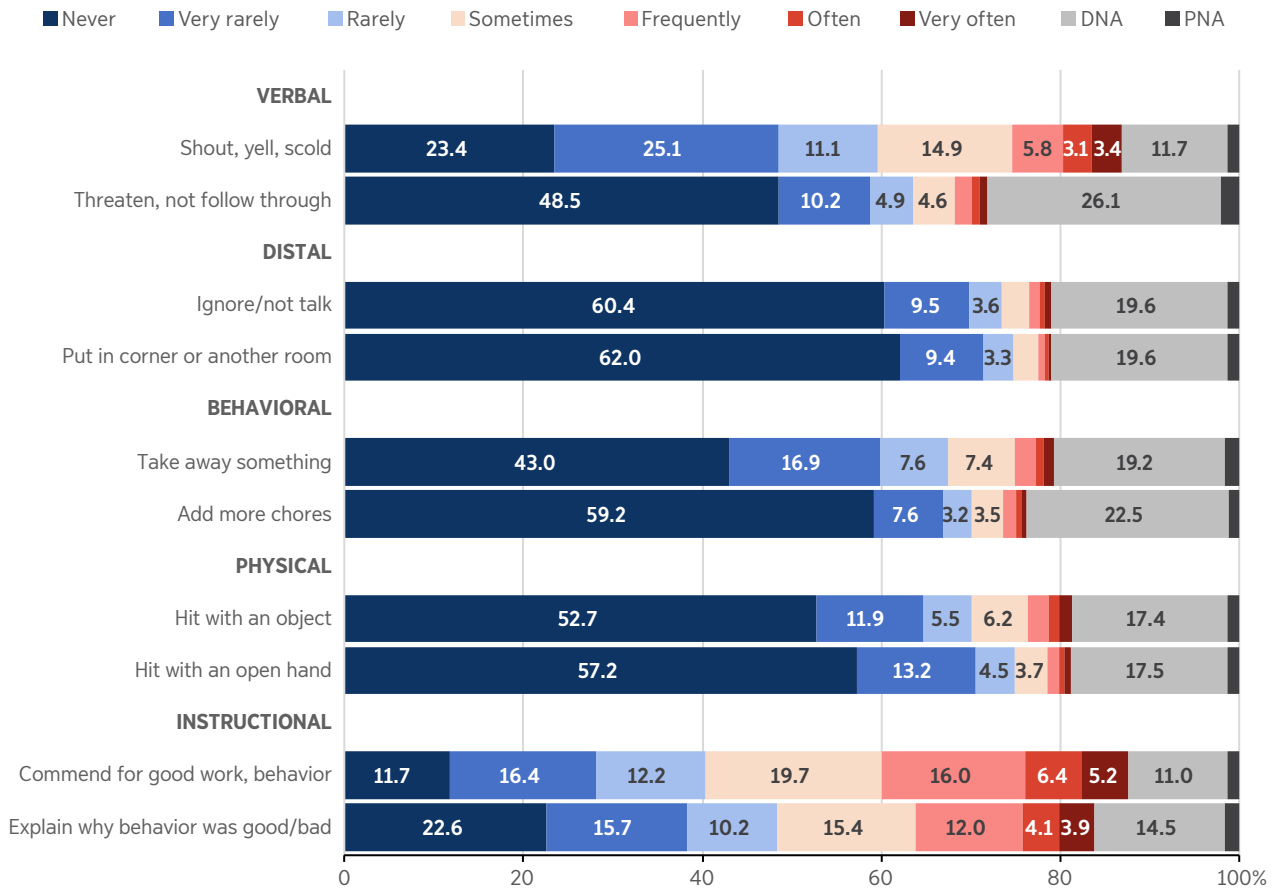
Based on parenting literature on child discipline, the study focused on 10 types of discipline that were categorized under five main discipline approaches. The categories of discipline approaches and the individual items were as follows:

- Verbal (shout, yell, scold; threaten to do something)
- Distal (ignore or not talk; send to another room)
- Behavioral (add more chores; take away or prohibit something)
- Physical (hit with an object; hit with an open hand)
- Instructional (commend for good work; explain why the behavior was good or bad)

Responses across parental gender and JW affiliation were combined to provide the recollections of the total sample regarding parental discipline. Figure 3.14 presents these findings, showing a range of discipline types. Most types of discipline were used rarely or very rarely, while instructional types of discipline were used more frequently than other approaches.

Figure 3.14. Recollection of parental discipline approaches (with DNA and PNA)

How often do you remember your [parent] doing the following when you were a child?



Note: *n* = 13,791. Combined responses of parental recollection on the use of different disciplining methods.

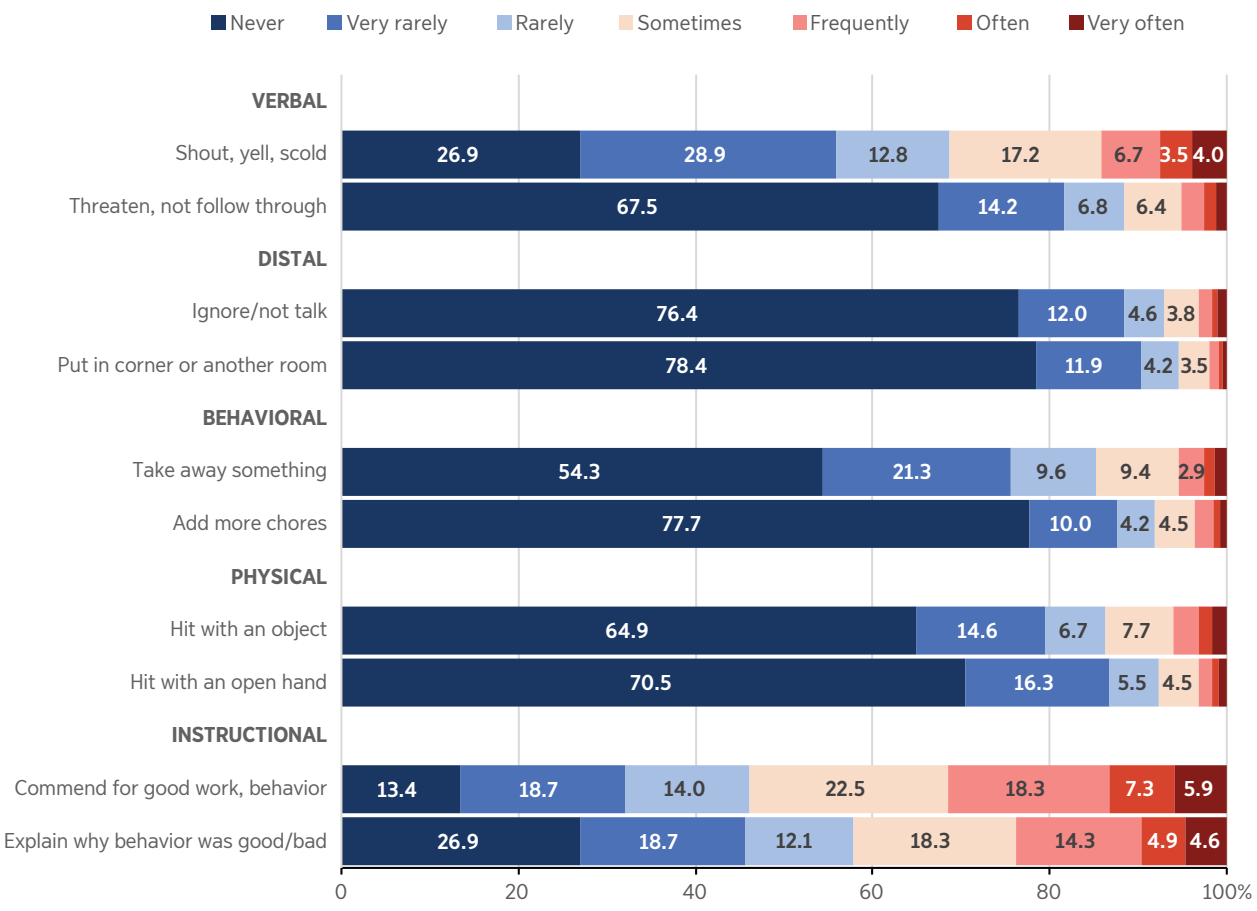
Based on adult children's recall, parents in Japan used varied types of discipline.

To better understand the representativeness of the parental discipline approaches, the subsequent analyses excluded DNA and PNA responses from the calculation, as shown by Figure 3.15. Among those who reported different types of recalled discipline approaches, "commend for good work or behavior" (31.5%) and "explain why behavior was good or bad" (23.8%) were reported as the most frequently used methods (frequently, often, and very often). Physical discipline methods, such as "hit with an open hand" (92.3%) and "hit with an object" (86.2%) were reported by the majority as never, very rarely, or rarely used.

> *I had a very strict upbringing during my childhood.*
>
> —Female, 40s, second-generation JW

Figure 3.15. Recollection of parental discipline approaches (without DNA and PNA)

How often do you remember your [parent] doing the following when you were a child?



Note: Sample size varied per discipline approach after removal of PNA and DNA responses.

Generational shifts in recalled discipline approaches. To examine potential generational differences in disciplinary approaches among JWs in Japan, respondents were grouped by decade according to year of birth: 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and in or after 2000.

As shown in Table 3.7, the cohorts include fewer older respondents born before 1940 (0.8%; $n = 56$) and younger respondents born in or after 2000 (1.6%; $n = 119$). The majority of respondents were born between 1940 and 1999. For the subsequent recalled discipline analyses on the mean scores, "does not apply" and "prefer not to answer" were excluded from the computations.

Table 3.7. Distribution of respondents by decade cohort

Year of birth	*n*	%
Before 1940	56	0.8
1940 to 1949	922	12.8
1950 to 1959	1,970	27.4
1960 to 1969	1,230	17.1
1970 to 1979	1,460	20.3
1980 to 1989	1,051	14.6
1990 to 1999	388	5.4
In or after 2000	119	1.6
Total	7,196	100

When I was a child, corporal punishment at school and verbal abuse at home were quite common. I am still struggling with the trauma. But that experience helps me to think that the Bible is really wonderful in teaching what is good and why so.

—Female, 60s, first-generation JW

Figure 3.16 illustrates the frequency of parental discipline approaches by respondent age. Most types of discipline were used "very rarely" across all decade age groups, except for instructional methods, which were used up to "sometimes." Specifically, respondents born before the 1960s reported lower frequencies of noninstructional discipline approaches compared with younger cohorts.

From the 1960s to the 2000s, verbal, distal, and behavioral approaches remained relatively constant. However, physical and instructional methods varied between cohorts. Physical discipline showed a downward trend after 1989, while instructional methods steadily increased after 1969.

Respondents born in or after 2000 (aged 18 to 24) recalled less frequent physical discipline compared with those from the 1980s, while reports of instructional discipline (commending and explaining) were higher.

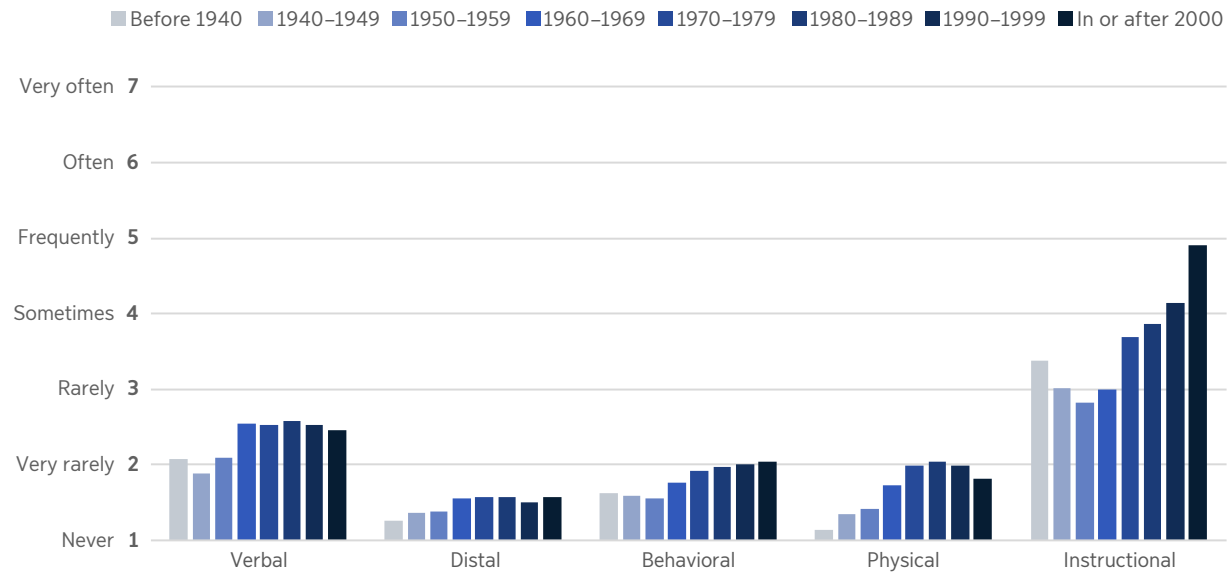
The data indicate an increase over time in the use of instructional methods, with the frequency of such discipline nearly doubling in or after 2000 compared with the 1960s.

Analyzing respondents' childhood recollections of school disciplinary methods offers insight into whether generational shifts in parental discipline resembled broader societal trends. This evaluation examines whether changes in family discipline are reflected within educational settings, thereby indicating potential societal influences on disciplinary approaches. By comparing recalled school discipline practices across various cohorts, patterns emerge that suggest a cultural evolution in attitudes toward discipline approaches. The following analysis concentrates on the frequency and nature of disciplinary approaches

employed by school officials, as recalled by respondents from different generational cohorts. It should be noted that parental and school discipline differ in important respects, for instance, considering that legal limits on physical punishment differed in time and scope in the two settings.

An analysis of recalled school discipline was conducted using responses to the question, "When you were a child, how often do you remember school officials doing the following things at school, in the classroom, or during club activities?" The same discipline items were given except "add more class or sports assignments" was used in place of "add more chores."

Figure 3.16. Frequency of parental discipline approaches by decade cohort



Note: Sample size varied by decade and discipline type.

Discipline approaches used by parents changed over time.

- Physical discipline approaches decreased in recent decades.
- Instructional approaches have trended upward since the 1970s.

During my childhood, my Witness mother was pretty strict when it came to discipline, and I was spanked many times. . . . Now, as a parent myself, I have been able to imitate the positive aspects of my mother's approach while correcting where she seemed to go too far.

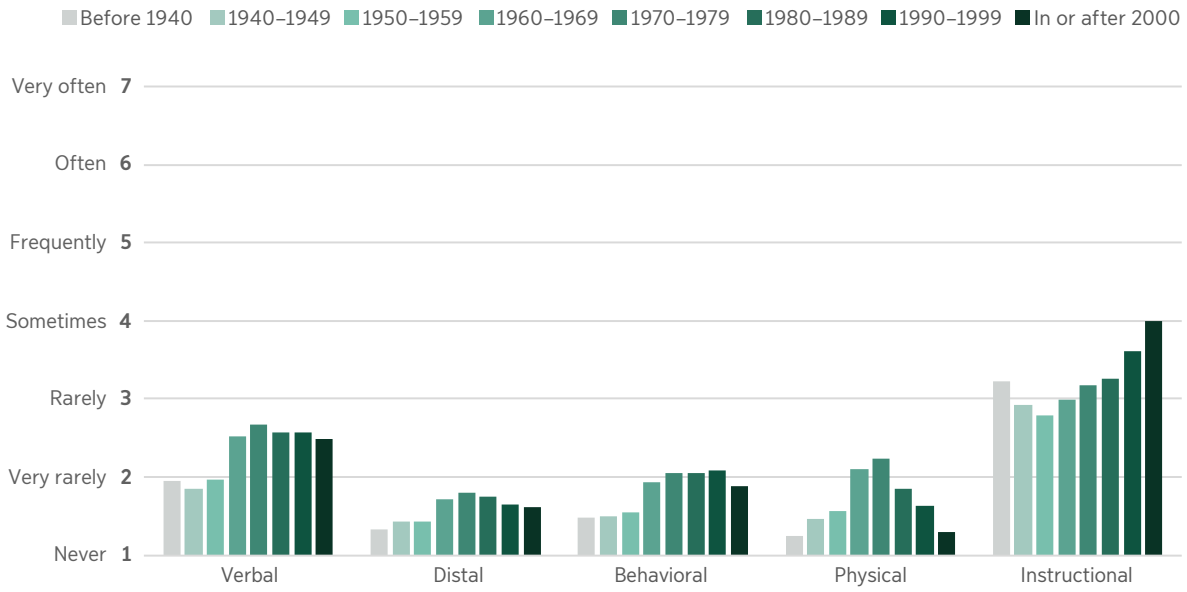
—Male, 50s, second-generation JW

As shown in Figure 3.17, respondents born in the 1940s and 1950s recalled less frequent use of discipline, mirroring the trends seen in parental discipline recall. Those born in or after 2000 also reported less physical discipline than those born in the 1970s, when such discipline reportedly peaked. The data suggest similar parental and school discipline patterns over time, reflecting a broader cultural shift. Notably, the decline in physical discipline practices began earlier in schools than in homes, potentially influenced by changes in teacher training and increased sensitivity toward discipline methods. These trends were statistically significant as

evidenced by Welch's *t*-tests conducted to account for the assumption of unequal variances between the groups. The results show that the decrease in the use of physical methods at schools between 1990 and 1999 (n = 354; M = 1.6; SD = 1.09) and in or after 2000 (n = 114; M = 1.3; SD = 0.80) is statistically significant [$t(258) = -3.49$; $p < 0.001$; $d = 0.32$]. A similar analysis conducted on school instructional methods revealed a significant increase [$t(188) = 2.64$; $p = 0.009$; $d = 0.29$] among the cohort born in or after 2000 (n = 117; M = 4.0; SD = 1.40) compared with the 1990s cohort (n = 371; M = 3.6; SD = 1.34).

Figure 3.17. Recollection of school discipline approaches by decade cohort

When you were a child, how often do you remember school officials doing the following things to you at school, in the classroom, or during club activities?



Note: Sample size varied by decade and discipline type.

Generational effects were observed for parental discipline and school discipline as recalled by JW adults.

- Parenting practices changed over the decades.
- Hitting with an object has declined somewhat since the 1980s.
- Commending and explaining have been increasing since the 1970s.

People might forget that there used to be an era when corporal punishment was normal or even encouraged in schools, and parents would tell teachers to hit their children without hesitation whenever they did something wrong. . . . Humans are greatly affected by the trends of the times.

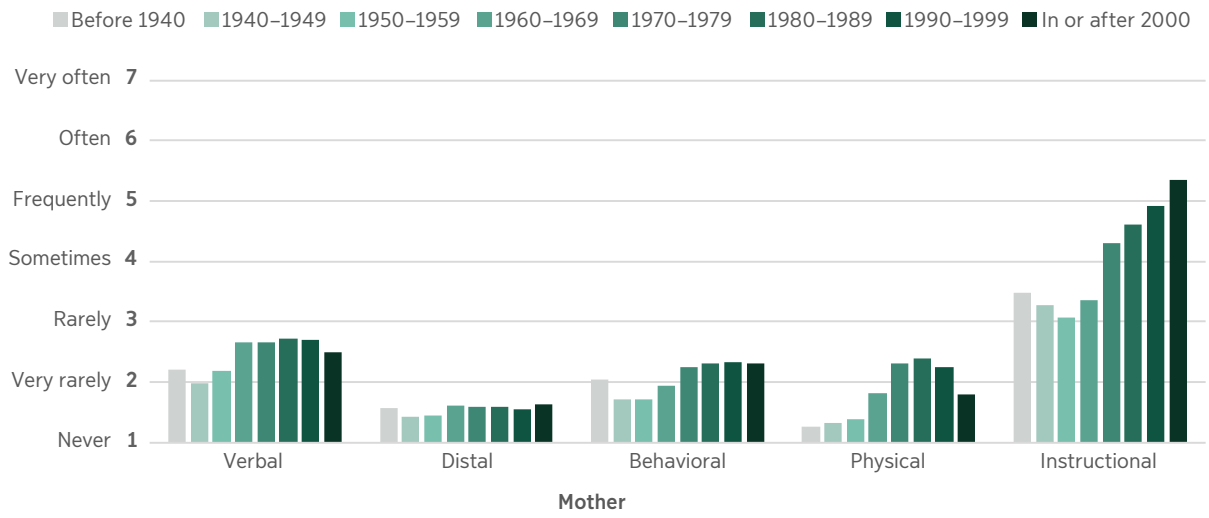
—Male, 60s, first-generation JW

Figure 3.18 and Figure 3.19 compare discipline practices used by mothers (JW and non-JW) and fathers (JW and non-JW) as recalled by adult children. Across all discipline approaches, respondents reported that their mothers administered discipline more than their fathers, with a slightly higher frequency of discipline overall, consistent with the cultural tradition of child discipline being cared for by mothers. Both mothers and fathers showed similar patterns in terms of the least frequent (distal, behavioral, and physical used very rarely) and more frequent (instructional and verbal) approaches.

While fathers' disciplinary practices did not vary significantly over time, except for a rise in instructional methods, mothers' approaches showed a tendency to increase in the use of instructional discipline in recent decades, accompanied by a reduction in physical approaches.

Figure 3.18. Recollection of mothers' approaches by decade cohort

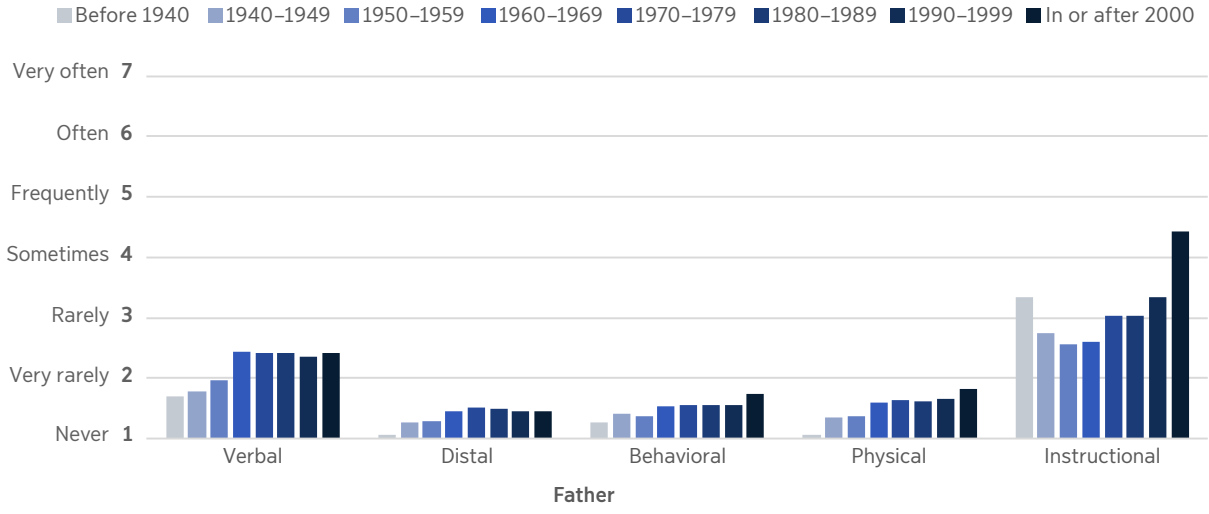
How often do you remember your mother doing the following when you were a child?



Note: Analysis includes respondents' recollection of all mothers, JW and non-JW. Sample size varied by decade and discipline type.

Figure 3.19. Recollection of fathers' approaches by decade cohort

How often do you remember your father doing the following when you were a child?



Note: Analysis includes respondents' recollection of all fathers, JW and non-JW. Sample size varied by decade and discipline type.

Adult children recalled more frequent discipline by mothers than fathers.

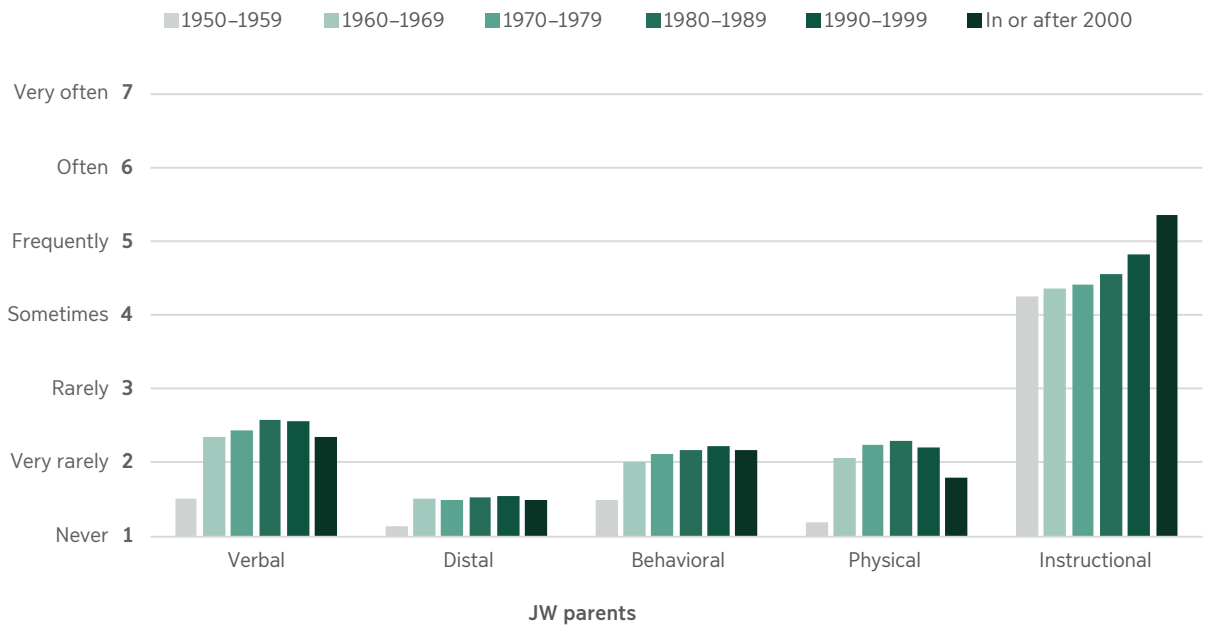
Figure 3.20 shows the recollection of JW parent discipline approaches by decade cohort. As recalled by their adult children, JW parents employed disciplinary approaches more than non-JW parents (see Figure 3.21). JW parents relied on instructional discipline considerably more than non-JW parents, for whom the use of instructional methods was closer to "rarely." Both JW and non-JW parents "very rarely" used physical discipline; however, among the youngest age cohort (born in or after 2000), physical approaches declined for JW parents while showing an increase among non-JW parents. These trends were statistically significant among JW parents. A Welch's two-sample *t*-test showed that the decrease in the use of physical methods among JW parents between 1990 to 1999 ($n = 445$; $M = 2.2$; $SD = 1.29$) and in or after 2000 ($n = 169$; $M = 1.8$; $SD = 1.12$) was statistically significant [$t(345) = -3.98$; $p < 0.001$; $d = 0.34$]. A similar analysis conducted on JW parental instructional methods revealed a significant increase in the cohort in or after 2000 [$n = 168$; $M = 5.4$; $SD = 1.31$; $t(318) = 4.42$; $p < 0.001$; $d = 0.39$] compared with the 1990 to 1999 cohort ($n = 459$; $M = 4.8$; $SD = 1.41$).

The results of JW parents and the disciplinary patterns recalled in schools revealed a significant decrease in physical methods and a marked increase in instructional discipline.

Although I was raised by parents who were not exemplary Witnesses, I have never experienced the abuse or terrible things that are typically reported by the media. Such controversial issues depend on the mental state and family circumstances of each parent and should not be generalized as a matter of Jehovah's Witness parents.

—Female, 40s, second-generation JW

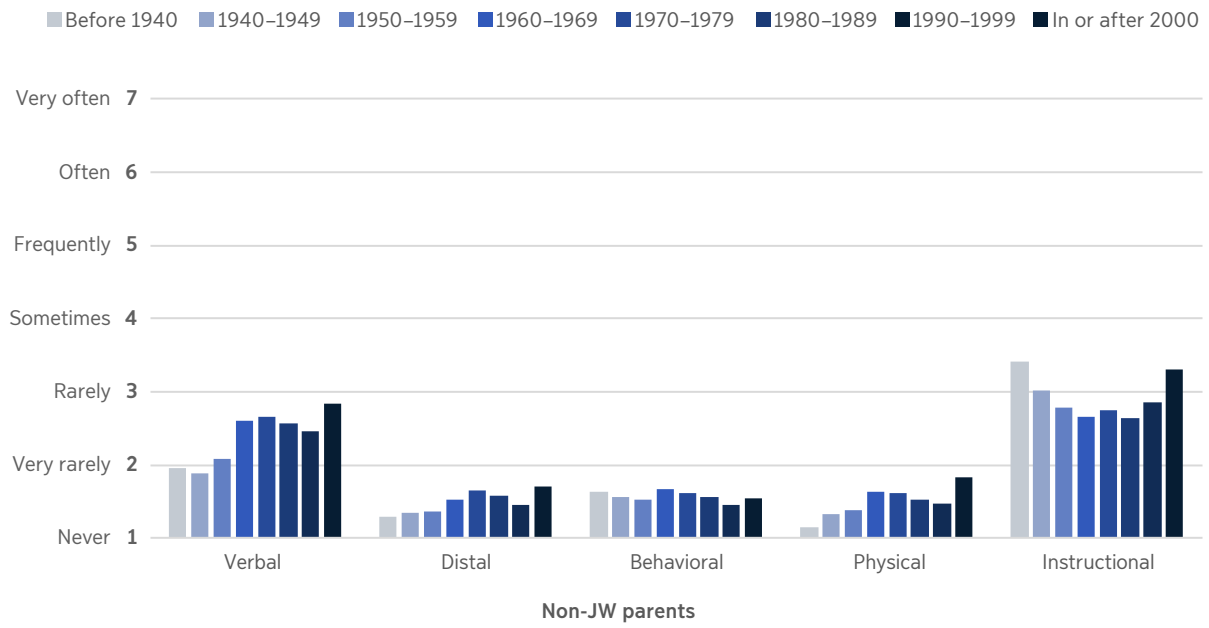
Figure 3.20. Recollection of JW parental approaches by decade cohort



Note: No subject among JW adult children was reported before 1940. Only four subjects were reported for the 1940–1949 cohort; for this reason, no cohort up to 1949 is reported in the chart. For the remainder cohorts, sample size varied by decade and discipline type.

Upon further analysis, the observed increase in the use of physical approaches among the non-JW parents (Figure 3.21) was not significant (1990–1999: n = 235; M = 1.5; SD = 0.89; in or after 2000: n = 47; M = 1.8; SD = 1.47; p = 0.11), nor was the instructional approach (1990–1999: n = 244; M = 2.8; SD = 1.54; in or after 2000: n = 48; M = 3.3; SD = 1.80; p = 0.11).

Figure 3.21. Recollection of non-JW parental approaches by decade cohort



Note: Sample size varied by decade and discipline type.

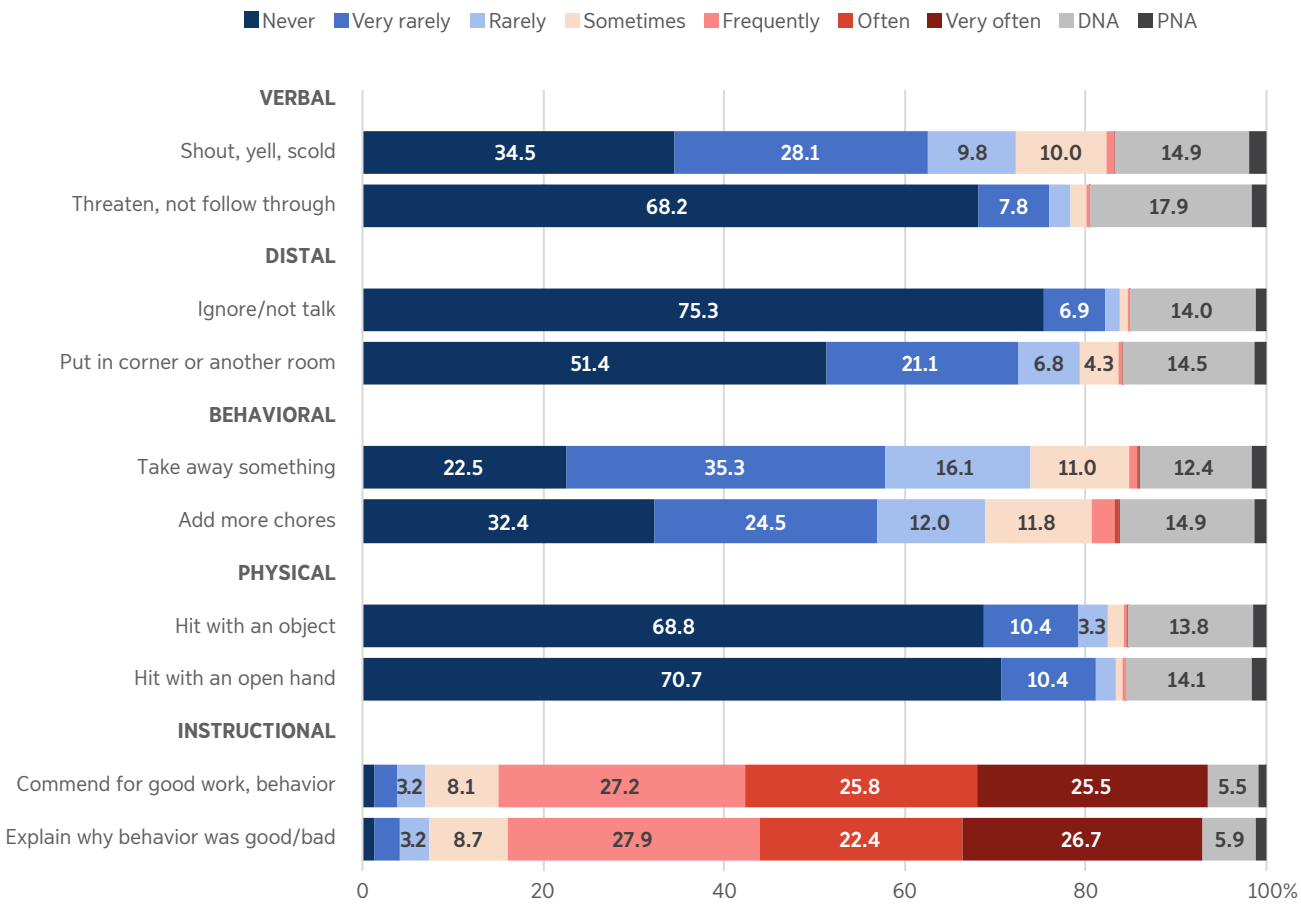
- Instruction was used by JW parents more than non-JW parents.
- Physical discipline was used very rarely by both JW and non-JW parents.

Acceptable discipline approaches among JWs. To better understand the perspectives of Jehovah's Witnesses regarding discipline approaches, the survey asked respondents to identify the most acceptable disciplinary methods, using the same response categories as the questions on parental and school discipline. Figure 3.22 shows that instructional discipline was considered the most acceptable approach to be used "very often," "often," and "frequently," including the items "commend for good work or behavior" (78.5%) and "explain why the behavior was good or bad" (77.0%).

Behavioral discipline was never, very rarely, or rarely considered acceptable, with even lower acceptance for verbal and distal approaches. Physical discipline was the least acceptable among Jehovah's Witnesses, with 70.7% responding that "hit with an open hand" was never acceptable and 68.8% indicating that "hit with an object" was never acceptable. As for the distal approach "ignore or not talk," 75.3% marked this as never acceptable. Another 5% to 18% of the respondents did not rate these discipline methods, selecting "does not apply."

Figure 3.22. Parental discipline approaches considered acceptable to JWs

How much do you think the following methods of discipline are acceptable for parents to use with children?



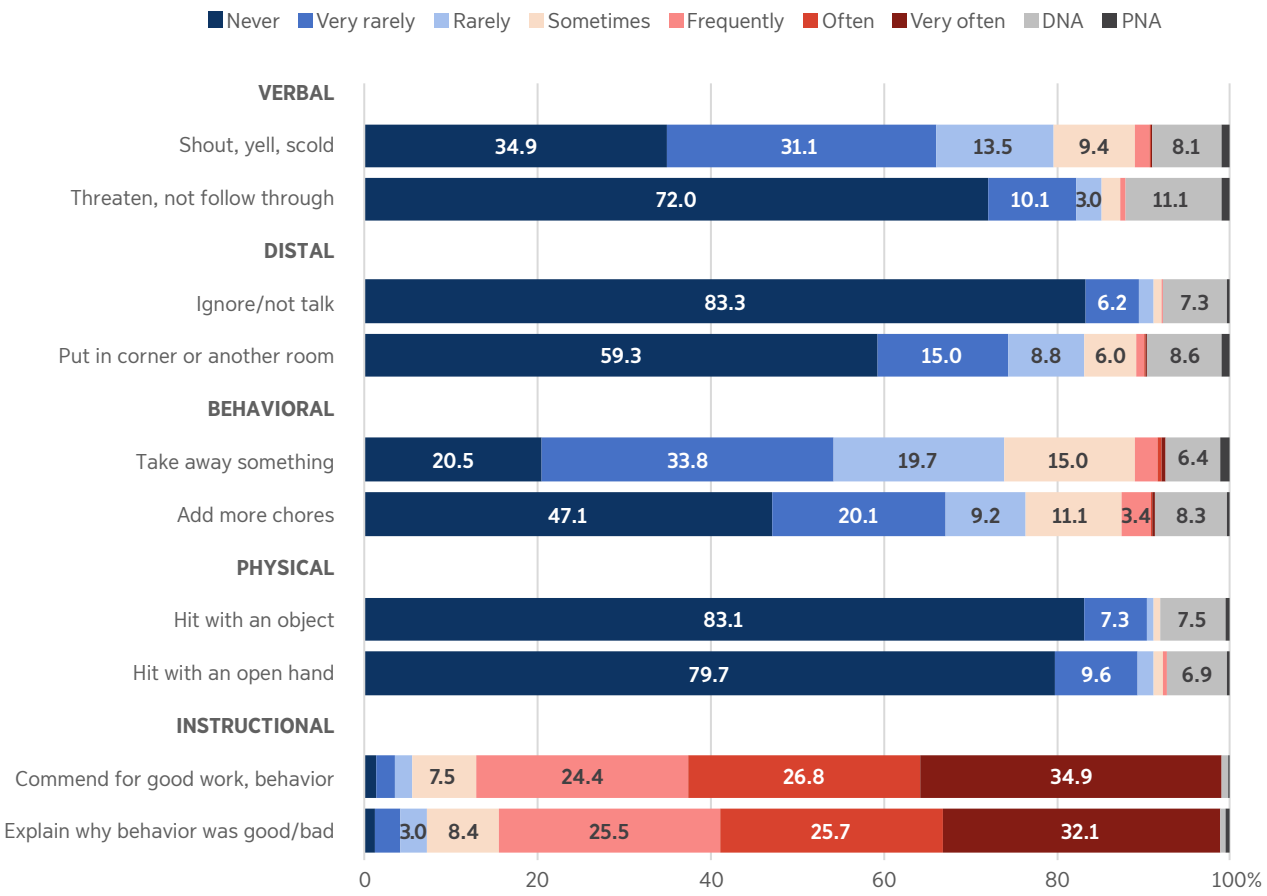
Note: *n* = 7,196.

A clear pattern emerges, as shown in Figure 3.23, among parents of minor children, with a strong emphasis on rejecting physical disciplinary approaches. Specifically, 83.1% reported they would "never" "hit with an object," and 79.7% would "never" "hit with an open hand." Additionally, 83.3% indicated they would "never" ignore or stop talking to a child as a form of discipline. A smaller proportion of these parents found it acceptable to "sometimes" use other approaches, such as taking away something (15.0%) or adding more chores (11.1%).

> *When it comes to raising my own daughters, I have never used abusive discipline because I strongly believe that they would understand what parents say if we properly explain things to them.*
>
> —Female, 30s, second-generation JW

Figure 3.23. Discipline approaches among parents or guardians of minor children

How much do you think the following methods of discipline are acceptable for parents to use with children?



Note: *n* = 533.

These research findings provide statistical evidence that Jehovah's Witness parents have consistently used instruction and commendation in their parenting approaches and decreased in their use of physical discipline approaches in recent decades.

Parental Approaches to Religious and Moral Education

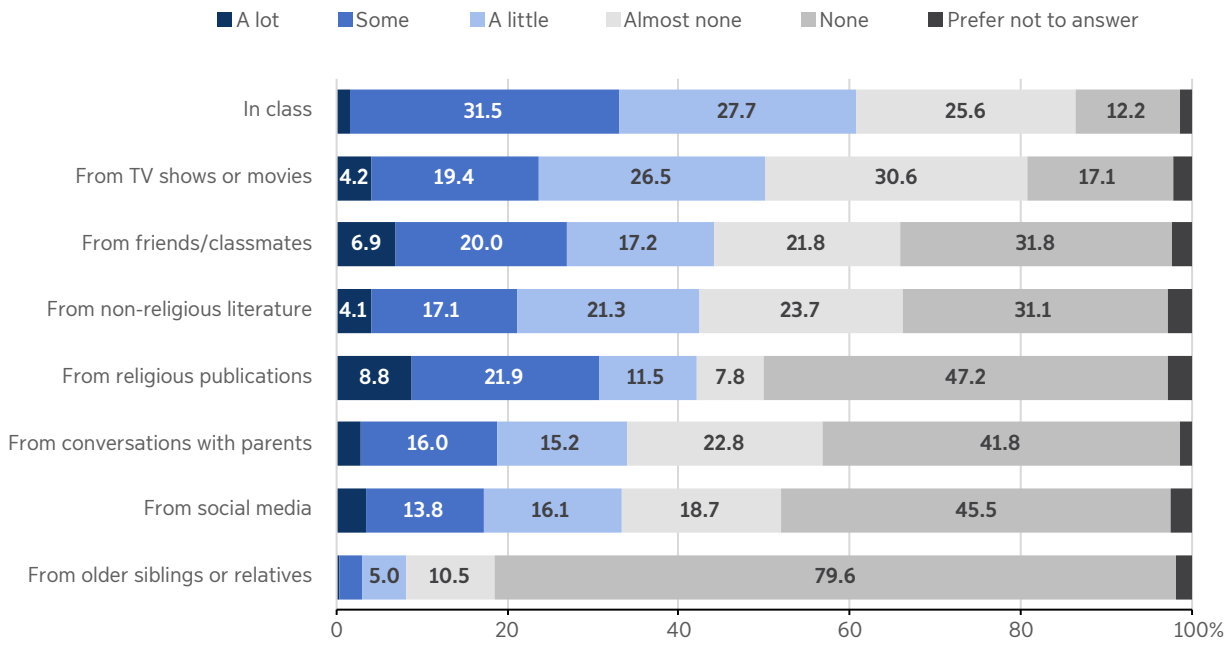
The study included as part of its assessment of parental approaches to child-rearing how respondents' attitudes and past experiences related to religious and moral education, including sex education.

Information sources on sex education during childhood. The survey asked, "During childhood, how much did you learn about sex from the following [sources]?" A range of options was provided, including friends, school classes, parents, media, and literature. For each source, respondents indicated their level of learning on a scale from "a lot" to "none" or "prefer not to answer."

The results in Figure 3.24 show a clear split among respondents' ratings. Respondents reported obtaining information on sex during childhood by selecting "a lot," "some," or "a little" from a broad range of sources: class (60.8%), TV shows or movies (50.1%), nonreligious publications (42.5%), religious publications (42.2%), friends or classmates (44.1%), and social media (33.3%). Notably, between 37.9% and 90.0% of respondents reported that they did not learn (combining "almost none" and "none" responses) from these sources.

Figure 3.24. Information sources on sex education during childhood

During childhood, how much did you learn about sex from the following?



Note: *n* = 7,196.

Attitudes about sex education. The survey assessed Jehovah's Witnesses' current personal views and opinions using ten statements related to sex education on a five-point strongly agree to strongly disagree scale, with a "prefer not to answer" option.

Figure 3.25 indicates the extent to which Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan view sex education as important. A notable 98.8% of respondents agreed (combining "strongly agree" and "agree") that "Teaching children about sex can help protect them," while 94.0% thought that "Because sex is more open today than in previous generations, children need information at younger ages." Similarly, 96.8% agreed that parents should take the lead in these discussions, which should be "age appropriate." Also, 94.7% agreed that "Religion can help parents teach about sex."

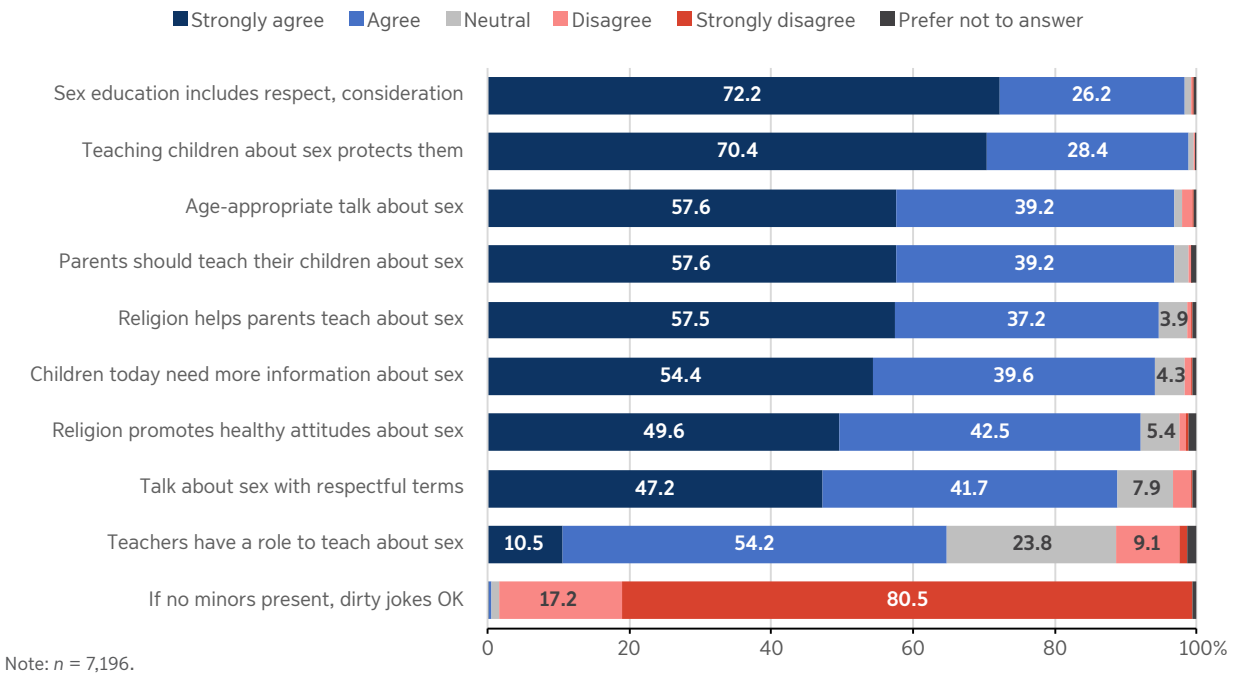
Survey respondents indicated their recognition of the need for respectful language in sex education. Nearly all respondents (98.4%) agreed that sex education should include "respect and consideration for others," while 88.9% agreed with "[using] respectful terms" when discussing these topics. Further, 97.7% strongly disagreed or disagreed that "If no minors are present, 'dirty' jokes about sex are not a problem." A notable 64.7% agreed that "Teachers have a role in teaching children about sex," while 23.8% were neutral.

These findings show that JWs in Japan view sex education as a protective measure for children that needs to be addressed in a respectful and age-appropriate manner.

> *It is a parent's duty to provide appropriate education to their children according to their age. This education should include moral education, which religion can take part in. Therefore, regardless of the religion, it is natural for parents to provide religious education to their children (until the age of 18). Rather, leaving the responsibility of providing moral education solely to schools, and not within the family circle, should be considered neglect.*
>
> —Male, 50s, second-generation JW

Figure 3.25. Attitudes about sex education

In your opinion, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



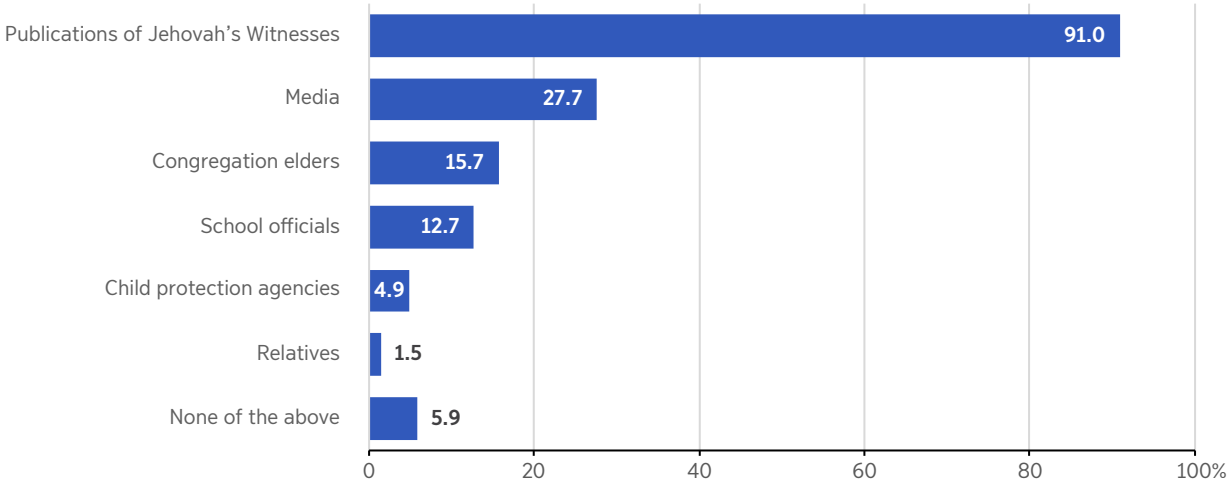
Note: *n* = 7,196.

Information sources on child protection. The survey assessed the resources that Jehovah's Witnesses have used to acquire information on sexual education and child protection against sexual abuse. Respondents were asked to select all applicable sources from a list that included child-protection agencies, school officials, JW publications, congregation elders, media, and relatives. The list also included an option for "none of the above" for those who did not receive information from these sources.

As Figure 3.26 shows, Jehovah's Witnesses have learned about child protection against sexual abuse from a range of sources, including general media (27.7%), school officials (12.7%), child-protection agencies (4.9%), publications of Jehovah's Witnesses (91.0%), and congregation elders (15.7%). It is important to note that the findings could indicate the general availability of resources for parents, suggesting that some sources may be more accessible than others.

Figure 3.26. Information sources on child protection

From where did you receive information regarding how to protect children from sexual abuse? (Select all that apply.)



Note: *n* = 7,196.

Parental teaching about morals and religion. Using retrospective, self-reported assessment, the survey measured different dimensions and perspectives of the respondents' upbringing.

The survey asked, "As you look back on the time growing up . . . , to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?" Respondents were asked to rate their degree of strong disagreement to strong agreement on a five-point scale (in addition to a "prefer not to answer" option) on seven items related to parental teaching about morality and religion. Responses were analyzed separately for two groups: those raised by at least one JW parent and those raised by non-JW parents. These subgroups made it possible to compare perspectives on parental influence, autonomy, and openness in discussing topics such as religion, sex, and morality.

Figure 3.27 shows the total subgroup samples including PNAs. Most respondents (91.3%) agreed that their JW parents wanted them to adopt the same beliefs compared with one-third (33.1%) of those with non-JW parents. Both groups with JW parents (57.9%) and non-JW parents (44.7%) indicated that they "rebelled" during adolescence. However, despite parents who were promoting their faith and adolescents who recalled some degree of opposition to their parents, both groups indicated a degree of agency and autonomy. Less than 15% of respondents with JW parents reported that "My Witness parent(s) tried to control my life choices," and 20.2% of those with non-JW parents viewed their parents as trying to control their life choices.

While "rebellion" in Japanese culture refers to having a different opinion from one's parent and not necessarily to an act of open rebellion, the findings suggest that while non-JW parents may have allowed for greater latitude in religious identity, ratings of autonomy in decision-making and self-expression during adolescence were close across groups. These findings are consistent with results described in Section 2 of this study on the perception of choice or control when studying with Jehovah's Witnesses, in which 96.2% of those with JW parents—second-generation JWs—agreed that "It was my personal decision" to adopt the faith, and 83.0% rejected the statement: "I felt Jehovah's Witnesses were trying to control me."

> *My father is a Buddhist and my mother is one of Jehovah's Witnesses. So I grew up in a religiously divided household. . . . I was able to think and make a decision for myself.*
>
> —Male, 50s, with JW mother and non-JW father

Openness to discussing sensitive topics like religion, sex, and morality varied notably between those with and without JW parents. With regard to religious beliefs, 76.7% with JW parents agreed they could ask their JW parents questions on the topic compared with 20.7% of those with non-JW parents. Discussions around sex and morality were more limited; 44.7% felt comfortable addressing these subjects with their JW parents compared with a mere 7.9% with their non-JW parents.

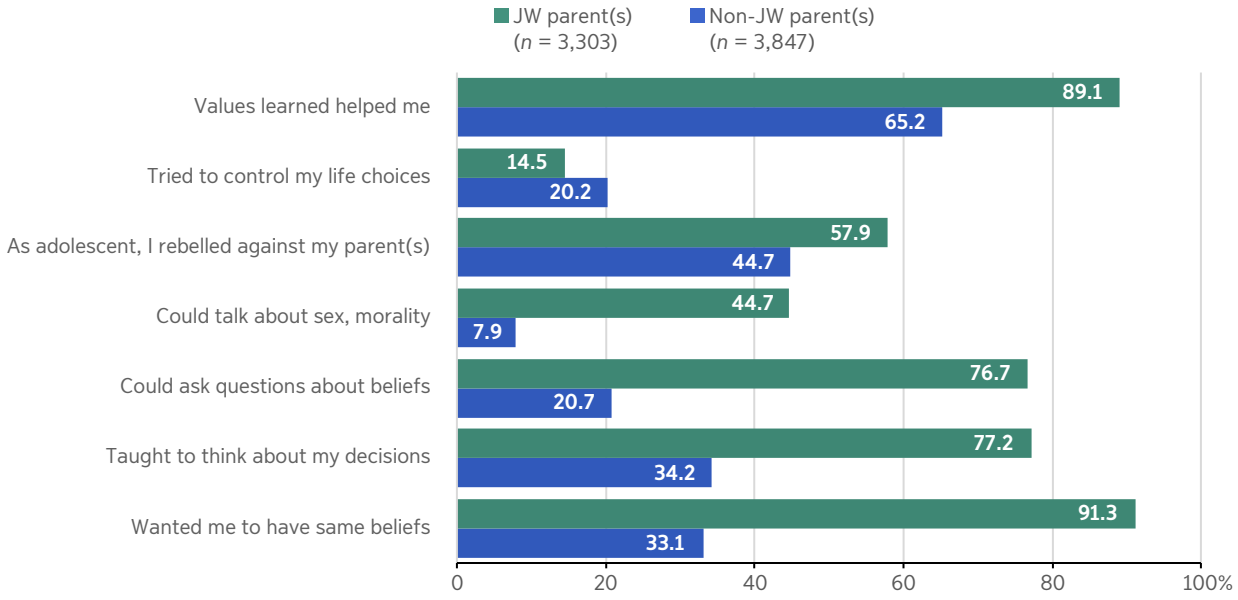
The retrospective assessment allowed the respondents to evaluate the impact of their parents' efforts to instill values and help them develop critical thinking by weighing their decisions. Of those raised by at least one JW parent, 89.1% agreed that "The values I learned from my Witness parent(s) helped me as an adult," and 77.2% said that "My parents taught me to think carefully about my life decisions," compared with 65.2% and 34.2%, respectively, among those reared exclusively by non-JW parents.

> *I grew up as a second-generation Jehovah's Witness, and I'm truly grateful for my mother that she raised me in accordance with Bible-based values.*
>
> —Female, 40s, with JW mother and non-JW father

To evaluate the differences in parental teachings about morals and religion between JW parent (n = 3,197) and non-JW parent groups (n = 3,583), excluding PNAs, a series of Welch's t-tests was conducted. The analysis revealed significant differences in mean scores between individuals raised by JW parents and those raised by non-JW parents on all conditions, with higher means representing greater agreement. Notably, respondents raised by JW parents reported significantly higher means with statements such as "Values I learned helped me" [M = 4.5; SD = 0.87; t(6,751) = 40.20; p < 0.001; d = 0.97; non-JW parents (M = 3.6; SD = 1.03)], "Could ask questions about beliefs" [M = 4.1; SD = 1.09, t(6,758) = 58.73; p < 0.001; d = 1.42; non-JW parents (M = 2.5; SD = 1.15)], and "Taught to think about my decisions" [M = 4.1; SD = 1.07; t(6,778) = 44.40, p < 0.001; d = 1.07; non-JW parents (M = 2.8; SD = 1.19)]. In contrast, respondents raised by non-JW parents reported significantly higher mean scores (M = 2.2; SD = 1.24) with the statement "Tried to control my life choices," compared with those raised by JW parents [M = 2.0; SD = 1.17; t(6,758) = -5.81 p < 0.001; d = 0.14]. These findings indicate that JW parenting practices are perceived with higher levels of imparted values that benefit their children in adulthood.

Figure 3.27. Recollection of parental teaching about morality and religion

As you look back on the time growing up . . . , to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Note: The chart shows the proportion of "strongly agree" and "somewhat agree" responses.

Parental religious education. The survey investigated how parents in the faith community of Jehovah's Witnesses view children's religious education, particularly parents' role in teaching their children about their religious beliefs. Respondents indicated on a five-point scale the extent to which they absolutely disagreed to absolutely agreed with eight statements about teaching religion to young children. A "prefer not to answer" option was also provided.

> *I believe that religion is a personal matter, where each individual needs to make their own decisions. Parents must not force even their children to have the same faith.*
>
> —Male, 60s, first-generation JW

As shown in Figure 3.28, while 89.8% agreed (combining "absolutely agree" and "agree") that "Parents must teach their children their own beliefs," an overwhelming percentage (96.4%) of Jehovah's Witnesses in the sample population believed that "When children grow up, they have the right to choose their own religion."

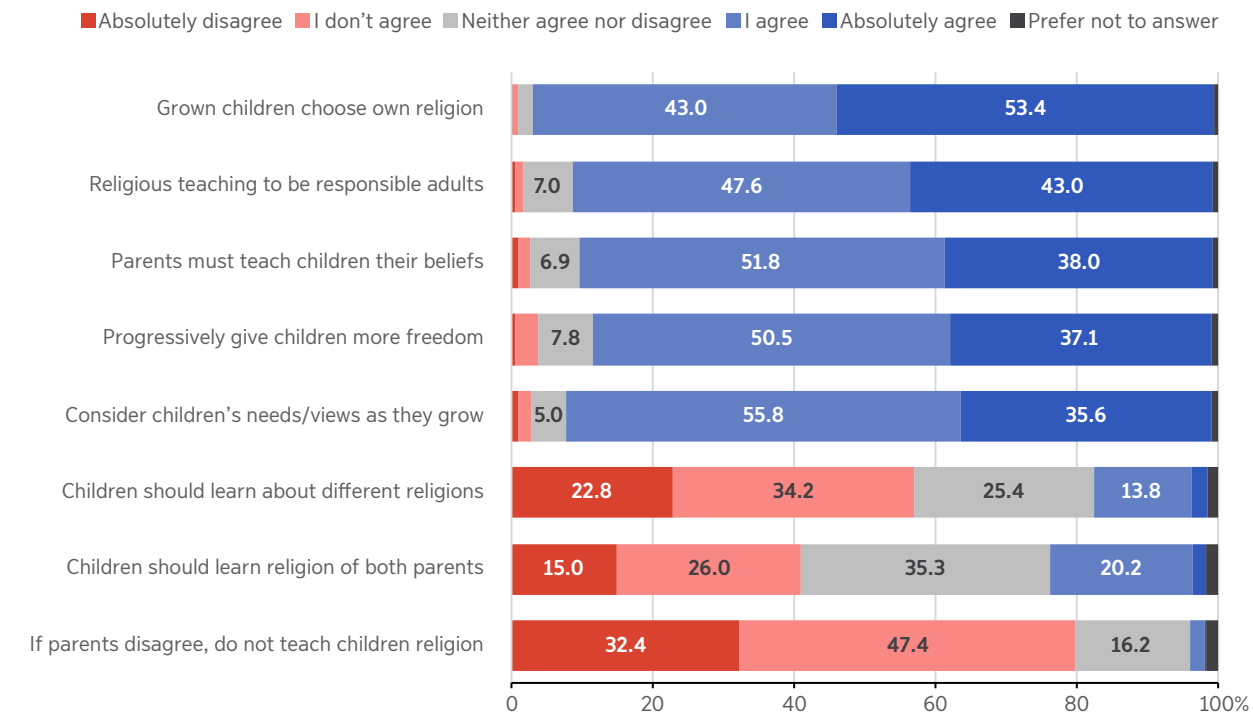
> *When my children reach crossroads in their lives, I hope they will have become adults with accurate knowledge, thoughtful consideration, and a compassionate personality.*
>
> —Male, 60s, first-generation JW

In addition, 90.6% of respondents agreed that "By teaching religion to their children, parents help them to become responsible adults." The majority (91.4%) thought that "As children mature, parents should consider their needs and views about religion," and 87.6% agreed that "Parents prepare adolescents for adulthood by progressively giving them more freedom."

Most respondents disagreed (combining "absolutely disagree" and "I don't agree") that "If parents do not agree about religious questions, they should not teach their children any religion" (79.8%). This viewpoint aligns with responses supporting the right of children to choose their religion when they grow up. However, when asked about their view of the statement

"Children should learn about different religions," 16.0% agreed, while 25.4% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 57.0% disagreed. Similarly, when asked about the statement "Children should learn the religion of both parents," 22.2% agreed, 35.3% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 41.0% disagreed. Some respondents may have disagreed because they associated "learning" with adopting other religious beliefs, whereas others who indicated agreement may have viewed "learning" as acquiring knowledge about diverse beliefs.

Figure 3.28. Attitude about parental religious education



Note: *n* = 7,196.

Time Spent in Weekly Activities

Family members have competing demands on their time. The survey assessed how Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan, especially those with minor children, spend their time. The question "On average, approximately how many hours in a normal week do you spend in the following activities?" listed four categories of activities:

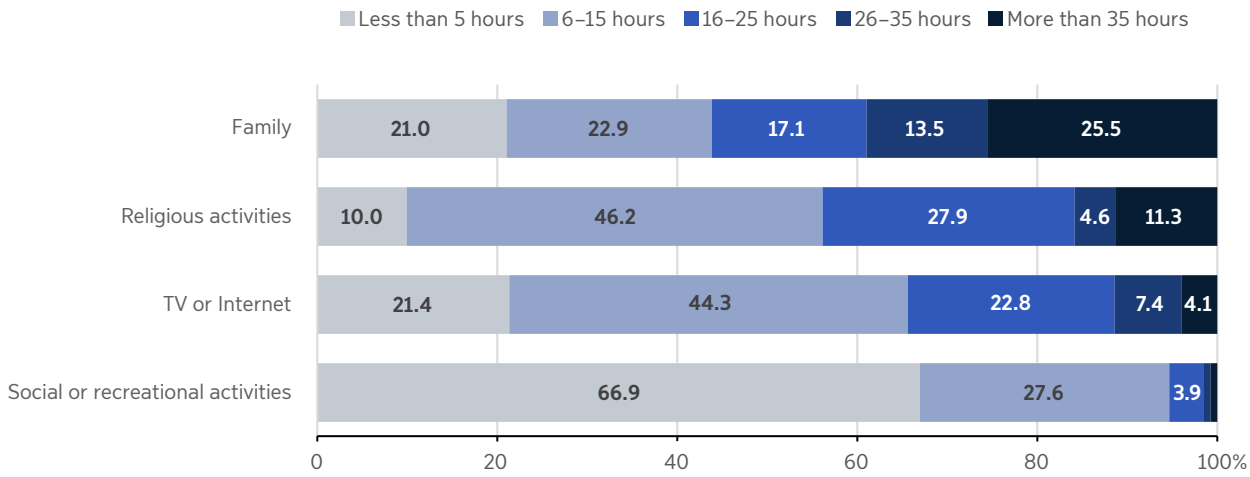
- Time with family (meals together, hanging out together)
- Time in social and recreational activities (such as playing sports, visiting friends)
- Time in organized religious activities (meetings, field service)
- Time watching TV or using the Internet

Respondents reported their weekly time spent using the time periods: less than 5 hours, 6 to 10 hours, 11 to 15 hours, 16 to 20 hours, 21 to 25 hours, 26 to 30 hours, 31 to 35 hours, 36 to 40 hours, and more than 40 hours.

Overall findings (Figure 3.29) indicate that for the total sample, respondents spent a considerable amount of time weekly in family activities. Over half (56.1%) of the respondents reported spending more than 15 hours weekly specifically devoted to family time, such as meals together or hanging out together. Regarding time spent in religious activities, 46.2% reported spending 6 to 15 hours in organized religious activities (meetings and field service, that is, public ministry), while 43.8% reported spending more than 15 hours weekly. Regarding time spent watching TV or using the Internet, 65.7% reported 15 hours or less weekly, with 21.4% reporting less than 5 hours, and 44.3% spending 6 to 15 hours. As to time spent in social and recreational activities (such as playing sports, visiting friends), 94.5% reported spending up to 15 hours (66.9% spent less than 5 hours, and 27.6% spent 6 to 15 hours). Although the data did not specify, many of the activities reported could have been shared family time.

Figure 3.29. Time spent on activities weekly – Total sample

On average, approximately how many hours in a normal week do you spend in the following activities?



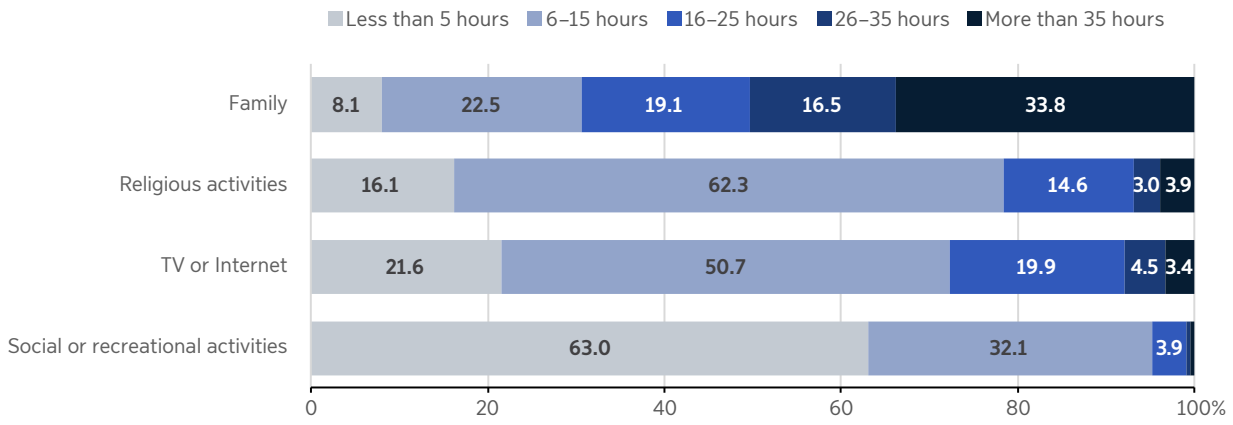
Note: *n* = 7,196. Time categories were summed into five groups to simplify visualization.

As Figure 3.30 shows, parents of minor children reported spending more time on weekly family activities than the total sample. In detail, 69.4% spent more than 15 hours per week in family activities, with comparable percentages of fathers (68.1%) and of mothers (70.1%). One-third of this subgroup (33.8%) reported spending more than 35 hours per week in family activities. As to religious activities, 78.4% of parents spent 15 hours or less. When it comes to watching TV or using the Internet, 21.6% spent less than 5 hours, and 50.7% spent 6 to 15 hours on such activities. Another 95.1% of parents spent up to 15 hours on social or recreational activities (63.0% spent less than 5 hours, and 32.1% spent 6 to 15 hours).

These findings indicate how parents of minors manage their time and balance family responsibilities with other needs.

Figure 3.30. Time spent on activities weekly – Parents or guardians of minor children

On average, approximately how many hours in a normal week do you spend in the following activities?



Note: *n* = 533. Time categories were summed into five groups to simplify visualization.

Overall, Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan reported high family satisfaction, with slight variation in mean scores across subgroups, regardless of gender, age group, in mixed- or same-faith marriages, or first- or second-generation Jehovah's Witnesses.

Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan place a high value on morality and sex education as a protective and essential component of child-rearing. There is a strong consensus within the community that parents should lead these educational efforts, ensuring that discussions are both age-appropriate and conducted with respectful language. Additionally, Jehovah's Witnesses utilize an array of information sources, with religious publications playing a pivotal role in disseminating knowledge about child protection and sex education. The emphasis on respectful and structured education reflects a commitment to fostering a safe and supportive environment for children. Furthermore, the generational trends indicate a balanced approach where parents encourage autonomy and critical thinking, allowing children to make informed decisions about their beliefs while providing religious guidance.

Conclusion

This study assessed essential characteristics of family life among Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan, examining demographic factors, household composition, family satisfaction and functioning, attitudes toward marriage, approaches to child discipline, and views on parental religious and moral education. While the survey provided data on a variety of family situations, from single to married, this section focused especially on parents with minor children. The research findings indicate that strong family cohesion, high marital commitment, and instructional discipline approaches are prevalent in the JW community. The findings also echo prior research on the potentially positive effects of religion on family life.

Marital commitment is a key support of satisfying family life among Jehovah's Witnesses, regardless of religious homogeneity. Strong marital stability fosters open communication, fidelity, and satisfaction, including in mixed-belief marriages. Such commitment is further reinforced among second-generation JWs, who predominantly marry within their faith, thereby

strengthening religious homogeneity and familial bonds. The findings reinforce studies showing the relationship between shared religious frameworks and marital stability.

First-generation Jehovah's Witnesses not only reported having a cohesive, expressive, and low-conflict family environment, but as reported in Section 2 (in Table 2.5), they experienced the most significant improvement in interpersonal relationships with other family members after becoming Jehovah's Witnesses. Across JW generations, most reported being satisfied with their family life and had a strong sense of togetherness and openness. Family functioning and satisfaction were found to be significantly higher for those who were JWs for a longer period of time.

Overall, JW parents appeared to balance an environment of religious instruction while progressively granting autonomy to their children during adolescence. Parenting approaches among Jehovah's Witnesses are characterized primarily by instructional discipline rather than physical punishment. Statistically significant trends were found related to discipline methods, with a significant decrease in reported physical methods and a marked increase in instructional discipline. From the viewpoint of those surveyed, JW religious meetings and publications have encouraged JW parents to use instructional discipline over corporal punishment and to adjust to the changing needs of children as they grow older. A large majority (91.8%) understand discipline to mean instruction and guidance, and this understanding reflects the broader societal shifts in Japan away from child discipline in the form of physical punishment. Adult children recalled learning helpful values during their childhood more so from JW parents than non-JW parents.

Religious values are an integral part of the Witnesses' approach to child-rearing. This instructional approach not only promotes respectful and supportive family environments but fosters critical thinking and gradual autonomy in children as they mature. The findings suggest that JW parents seek to actively engage in age-appropriate discussions, enabling their children to make informed religious and moral choices, as evidenced by second-generation JWs who reported having chosen to remain in the faith of their own volition. Their choice to do so exemplifies successful child socialization in religious norms, which children internalize more readily when parents model consistent practices. The relative effectiveness of these approaches to child-rearing is seen in the overall social stability and well-being reported by second-generation Jehovah's Witnesses.

Intergenerational transmission of religious affiliation is clearly evident in the data, with over 80% of respondents having at least one relative who shares their religious beliefs. Second-generation JWs, in particular, give evidence of strong parental and perhaps grandparental influence, facilitating the continuity of religious practices and values. This transmission may contribute to the high levels of family satisfaction and cohesion reported by the sample population, as families navigate the balance between religious instruction and individual autonomy.

The study also highlights the community's proactive stance on child protection and sex education, emphasizing a protective and respectful approach to moral teaching and that reflects broader societal concerns about protecting minors from sexual abuse. Respondents expressed a strong commitment to integrating religious and moral values in their parenting. Jehovah's Witness parents view themselves as primarily responsible to provide their children with family-led, age-appropriate guidance on sex and morals.

In summary, the JWJ-QS study provides a portrait of family life among Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan. Study findings confirm existing research showing connections between well-functioning families and strong marital commitment, along with such contributory factors as open communication, mutual respect, and religiousness.

SECTION FOUR

Personal Values, Priorities, and Attitudes

Previous sections of this report covered the demographic, religious, and familial situations among the Jehovah's Witness community in Japan. This section examines Jehovah's Witness respondents' attitudes about their commitment to moral values, their priorities, and the primary concerns that shape their daily lives. Additionally, it explores their willingness to assist others, their sense of civic responsibility, and their views toward the religious positions of nonviolence and political neutrality.

The data findings answer the following questions:

1. How do Jehovah's Witnesses regard the application of their moral and religious values in social and political situations?
2. What priorities and life concerns do Jehovah's Witnesses have?
3. What is their attitude toward those inside and outside of their family and religious community?
4. How do Witnesses view governmental authority and civic responsibility?

This examination of JWJ-QS findings about personal values, priorities, and attitudes begins with an overview of basic related concepts.

Morals and Values

Morals and values refer to beliefs that guide human interactions in society. Definitions of morals and values vary and overlap; but morals are often seen as societal guidelines for conduct, whereas values are described as personal standards of right and wrong.[1] The compound term "moral values" as used here combines the concept of societal or group standards of right and wrong as embodied in an individual who adopts them to guide personal decisions and behaviors. Morality has been described as the "social glue" that facilitates sharing, cooperation, and the development of positive relationships.[2]

In early stages of moral development, children tend to see right and wrong in simple terms. As moral understanding progresses, moral sensibility becomes attuned to more intricate situations and higher-level reasoning. Children develop moral values through their interactions with others, initially with their parents or caregivers. But in adolescence and even into adulthood, "interpersonal relationships and the socio-cultural context are decisive as they influence and modify the moral sense."[3]

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[1] Bernard Gert and Joshua Gert, "The Definition of Morality," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2020 edition, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/morality-definition/.

[2] Daniel A. Yudkin et al., "Binding Moral Values Gain Importance in the Presence of Close Others," *Nature Communications* 12 (2021): Article 2718, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-021-22566-6. Associated terms are ethics (a belief system governing conduct of a group) and virtues (qualities related to right or moral behavior).

[3] Pierpaolo Limone and Giusi Antonia Toto, "Origin and Development of Moral Sense: A Systematic Review," *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (2022): Article 887537, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.887537.

On a group level, a sense of moral responsibility can motivate collective human behaviors. When in the company of other group members, individuals tend to act more in line with group values.[4] Therefore, the choice of social group and immediate social circle can heavily impact one's moral path. Such terms as moral crusade, moral panic, moral outrage, and moral entrepreneurship suggest that the moral sensibilities of social groups can be mobilized or manipulated.[5]

Moral judgment refers to the process of determining what is right and wrong so as to decide on appropriate behavior. Moral integrity conveys the concept of consistent application of moral values in varied situations.[6] However, research has found a wide gap between word and deed—that is, a disconnect between the claim to hold general moral values (e.g., goodness, honesty) and actual deeds, with moral behavior depending much on personal disposition, situation, and social context.

Certain factors may narrow the gap between self-stated moral ideals and actual moral behaviors. For instance, one study found that survey responses may more strongly predict moral behavior if the question concerns specific situations instead of general values.[7] Choosing to be part of a cohesive social group whose values parallel one's own, or to which one aspires, can foster moral decision-making in line with those shared values.[8] Along with moral judgment, a strong moral identity (with internalized moral values) also appears to be a strong predictor of corresponding moral behaviors.[9]

The conscience has been described as an innate inner sense that monitors and evaluates a person's actions in relation to personal moral values. The conscience fosters awareness of one's moral obligations and can guide one to maintain a course of moral integrity.[10] The exercise of moral freedom refers to the making of decisions that satisfy one's internal "authority of conscience."[11]

When individuals violate their deeply held moral values, feelings of guilt are said to arise from the conscience. Guilt has been defined as a negative moral evaluation of one's actions, which can also involve taking responsibility for harmful attitudes and behaviors.[12] Heeding the prodding of what is commonly called "a guilty conscience" can potentially lead to moral reparation and healing.[13]

Morals and conscience in Jehovah's Witness teaching. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that all humans have a conscience and are capable of moral behavior. They also believe that, because of human imperfection (sin), the conscience needs calibration in line with biblical moral standards.[14]

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[4] Yudkin et al., "Binding Moral Values Gain Importance."

[5] Jay J. Van Bavel et al., "Social Media and Morality," *Annual Review of Psychology* 75 (2024): 311–40, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-022123-110258.

[6] Alexios Arvanitis and Konstantinos Kalliris, "Consistency and Moral Integrity: A Self-Determination Theory Perspective," *Journal of Moral Education* 49 no. 3 (2020): 316–29, https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2019.1695589.

[7] Tom Gerardus Constantijn van den Berg, Maarten Kroesen, and Caspar Gerard Chorus, "Why Are General Moral Values Poor Predictors of Concrete Moral Behavior in Everyday Life? A Conceptual Analysis and Empirical Study," *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (2022): Article 817860, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.817860.

[8] Yudkin et al., "Binding Moral Values Gain Importance."

[9] S. J. Reynolds and T. L. Ceranic, "The Effects of Moral Judgment and Moral Identity on Moral Behavior: An Empirical Examination of the Moral Individual," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 92, no. 6 (2007): 1610–24, https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.92.6.1610.

[10] Xavier Symons, "Why Conscience Matters: A Theory of Conscience and Its Relevance to Conscientious Objection in Medicine," *Res Publica* 29 (2023): 1–21, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11158-022-09555-2.

[11] Barbara M. Stilwell, Matthew Galvin, and Stephen M. Kopta, *Right vs. Wrong – Raising a Child with a Conscience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 122–23.

[12] Maria Miceli and Cristiano Castelfranchi, "Reconsidering the Differences between Shame and Guilt," *Europe's Journal of Psychology* 14, no. 3 (2018): 710–33, https://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v14i3.1564.

[13] Stilwell, Galvin, and Kopta, *Right vs. Wrong.*

[14] "Right and Wrong: The Bible—A Reliable Guide," *Watchtower*, No. 1 2024, 6–9, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-no1-2024/right-and-wrong-bible-a-reliable-guide/.

The Witness community's general agreement on the Bible as the source of moral standards is evident in JWJ-QS findings, which show relative unanimity in self-reported attitudes toward such values as marital commitment and fidelity, family values, and parental responsibility to nurture and protect their children.[15] Additional values reported in this section and the final section also provide evidence of the same pattern.

Given that researchers find a weak link between stated moral values and actual behaviors, the question arises of whether JWJ-QS respondents' self-reported or anticipated behaviors reflect their actions. The survey did not quantify actual behavior. However, similar to factors noted above that tend to narrow the gap between word and deed, several features of JW religious practices may help individual Witnesses to live in accord with the moral values they say they hold. For instance, JW study materials on broad biblical principles provide specific examples of application in everyday scenarios.[16] The cohesive nature of JW congregation life (see Figure 2.13) can provide support for those endeavoring to align their conduct with their moral values. The degree to which Witnesses internalize core moral teachings of the religion (see Figures 2.7 and 2.10) can foster the development of a strong moral identity, leading to more consistent moral behavior.

According to JW teaching, even if humans embrace perfect moral standards, no one is capable of perfect adherence. Survey findings include candid responses indicating personal struggles, doubts, or failings with regard to religious ideals. Witness beliefs, like other religious systems, include concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation with God that call for genuine remorse and change of behavior.[17] As detailed in Section 2, some individuals in the sample population had left and later resumed association with the JW community, apparently experiencing this process of reaffiliation with the faith community. (See Figures 2.11 and 2.12 and Tables 2.3 and 2.4.)

A sincere belief in and personal experience of the benefits of living by biblical standards of morality may be factors motivating individual Witnesses to spread their faith publicly as an act of benevolent sharing with others.[18]

Life priorities and concerns. Humans navigate multiple social roles in life and their competing or conflicting demands, large and small. The highest priorities in life may not be those requiring the most time or resources. Instead, they may be core objectives or guiding principles, such as personal fulfillment, quality relationships, and religious or moral attainments. These less tangible objectives may act as a fulcrum on which other life priorities, goals, and decisions pivot.

Major priorities shift and change over life stages.[19] Young adults may pursue more gain-oriented goals, while older adults may focus on maintenance and stability.[20] Attainment of goals has been linked to

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[15] Sociologist George D. Chryssides notes that among Jehovah's Witnesses, "there tends to be closer proximity between official teaching and believers' understanding." *Jehovah's Witnesses: A New Introduction* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 41.

[16] "Guide Your Steps by Godly Principles," *Watchtower,* April 15, 2002, 18–23, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/w20020415/Guide-Your-Steps-by-Godly-Principles/; "Let God's Laws and Principles Train Your Conscience," *Watchtower,* June 2018, 16–20, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-june-2018/let-gods-laws-principles-train-conscience/.

[17] "What Is True Repentance?," *Watchtower*, October 2021, 2–7, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-october-2021/What-Is-True-Repentance/; "We Serve a God Who Is 'Rich in Mercy'," *Watchtower*, October 2021, 8–13, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-october-2021/We-Serve-the-God-Who-Is-Rich-in-Mercy/; "Rebuilding Your Friendship With Jehovah," *Watchtower*, October 2021, 14–17, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-october-2021/Rebuilding-Your-Friendship-With-Jehovah/. For recent updates on pastoral procedures in cases of serious wrongdoing, see also *Watchtower,* August 2024, 1–32, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-august-2024/.

[18] See the article series "The Bible Changes Lives," on jw.org, https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/experiences/bible-changes-lives/.

[19] For a discussion of Erikson and Havighurst's related concept of development tasks tied to life stages, see Janina Larissa Bühler et al., "A Closer Look at Life Goals across adulthood: Applying a Developmental Perspective to Content, Dynamics, and Outcomes of Goal Importance and Goal Attainability," *European Journal of Personality* 33, no. 3 (2019): 359–84, https://doi.org/10.1002/per.2194.

[20] Masahiro Toyama, Heather R. Fuller, and Joel M. Hektner, "Psychosocial Factors Promoting Personal Growth throughout Adulthood," *Journal of Happiness Studies* 21 (2020): 1749–69, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-019-00155-1.

happiness and life satisfaction. This may especially be the case when reaching goals based on a person's internalized values, which "inspires autonomous motivation" and the "mental energy" that aids in meeting challenges.[21]

Like life priorities, life concerns may be ranked by their immediacy, intensity, near-term or long-term consequences, the degree of control or responsibility one exercises over matters of concern, and so forth. When people reach beyond their own concerns, certain psychosocial benefits accrue. For instance, social and emotional learning educators point to improved social and emotional skills, positive social attributes and behaviors, and reduced aggression, anxiety, and depression for young people who show concern for others.[22] These outcomes resemble the well-documented benefits of altruism and other prosocial behaviors.[23]

Life priorities and concerns among Jehovah's Witnesses. Jehovah's Witnesses are composed of nationalities and ethnic groups worldwide and thus face similar challenges and choices to those of the general population. However, as with other social groups, particularly religious communities, moral and ethical concerns and priorities rank high in importance among individual Witnesses. The JW belief system is modeled on early Christian practice, which embraced self-sacrifice, nonviolence, and strong communal values. So while people's responses to life situations may vary according to culture, background, or immediate environment, Witnesses' responses toward life situations often reflect their religious outlook.[24]

Civic Responsibility and Political Neutrality

Helping behavior. As noted above, one form of prosocial behavior involves helping others beyond one's immediate social circle. Among the attributes associated with helping behavior is compassion—a desire to act to alleviate others' suffering.[25] Collectivist cultures are characterized by willingness to contribute toward goals and interests within the collective.[26]

In studying group behavior, research has often emphasized attitudes of discrimination, conflict, or aggression toward those outside an in-group.[27] However, more recent research has examined prosocial group behavior, such as helping others not only within groups but between groups.[28] Volunteering is seen as a distinctive kind of planned helping that takes place across group boundaries.[29] Individuals

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[21] Wangshuai Wang et al., "Achievement Goals and Life Satisfaction: The Mediating Role of Perception of Successful Agency and the Moderating Role of Emotion Reappraisal," *Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica* 30, article 25 (2017): 2, https://doi.org/10.1186/s41155-017-0078-4.

[22] Aakash A. Chowkase, "Social and Emotional Learning for the Greater Good: Expanding the Circle of Human Concern," *Social and Emotional Learning: Research, Practice, and Policy* 1 (June 2023): Article 100003, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sel.2023.100003.

[23] Shawn A. Rhoads and Abigail A. Marsh, "Doing Good and Feeling Good: Relationships between Altruism and Well-being for Altruists, Beneficiaries, and Observers," chap. 4 in *World Happiness Report 2023*, 11th ed., Sustainable Development Solutions Network, https://worldhappiness.report/ed/2023/doing-good-and-feeling-good-relationships-between-altruism-and-well-being-for-altruists-beneficiaries-and-observers/.

[24] George D. Chryssides, *Jehovah's Witnesses: Continuity and Change* (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2016), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315251561; Jolene Chu and Ollimatti Peltonen, *Jehovah's Witnesses,* Series: Elements of New Religious Movements (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025), https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009375191.

[25] Tania Singer and Olga M. Klimecki, "Empathy and Compassion," *Current Biology* 24, no. 18 (2014): 875–78, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2014.06.054.

[26] Shinichi Hirota, Kiyotaka Nakashima, and Yoshiro Tsutsui, "Psychological Motivations for Collectivist Behavior: Comparison between Japan and the U.S.," *Mind & Society* 22, (2023): 103–28, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11299-023-00298-y; Harry C. Triandis, *Individualism and Collectivism* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995).

[27] Robert Böhm, Hannes Rusch, and Jonathan Baron, "The Psychology of Intergroup Conflict: A Review of Theories and Measures," *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 178, (2020): 947–62, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2018.01.020.

[28] Stefan Stürmer and Mark Snyder, eds., *The Psychology of Prosocial Behavior: Group Processes, Intergroup Relations, and Helping* (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

[29] Jane Allyn Piliavin, "Volunteering across the Life Span: Doing Well by Doing Good," chap. 8 in *The Psychology of Prosocial Behavior: Group Processes, Intergroup Relations, and Helping*, ed. Stefan Stürmer and Mark Snyder (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 157–72.

belonging to communities that hold volunteering as a key group value can be more motivated to extend individual help to those outside their group.[30]

Empathetic reactions by those observing distressed persons (including reactions of guilt in those who caused distress) seem to motivate prosocial behaviors, including helping, apologizing, and making reparations.[31] In one study, children of elementary school age and younger were told a story of a child who harmed another child. Children who recognized the harm and attributed guilt to the "story child" were more likely to engage in helping behavior toward someone in distress.[32]

Yet, this cultural value may be tested in situations involving sacrifice or even danger. Sociologists Samuel and Pearl Oliner, pioneers in altruism research, examined altruistic helping behavior through the lens of the Holocaust, during which a comparatively small number of rescuers risked their lives in behalf of Jews facing the genocidal Nazi onslaught. Though no composite "altruistic personality" emerged from the research, several common characteristics were identified. For instance, the attribute of "extensivity" describes "an uncommon commitment that transcended group loyalties" and "the means to assume commitments and responsibilities toward diverse groups of people."[33]

Oliner and Oliner did not find religious affiliation to be a defining characteristic among rescuers during the Holocaust. However, they observed that those rescuers who credited their actions to religion differed "in their interpretation of religious teaching and religious commitment, which emphasized the common humanity of all people."[34]

Helping among Jehovah's Witnesses. The lesson of the biblical parable of the Good Samaritan, as taught in JW literature, is similar to the concept of extensivity—that the Christian ideal of love of neighbor extends beyond one's immediate circle and includes people of different ethnicities or religions.[35] Witnesses see their volunteer Bible education work as their chief way of helping others outside their faith community. They organize international volunteers to provide humanitarian aid in times of disaster or war.[36]

The ideal of love of neighbor and moral integrity meets its ultimate test in cases of mass violence and genocide, when governments draw hard lines between "Us," who must support the cause, and "Them," who must be eliminated.[37] During two modern genocides, in Nazi-occupied Europe and in Rwanda, scholars have documented Jehovah's Witnesses' group and individual

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[30] Allen M. Omoto and Mark Snyder, "Influences of Psychological Sense of Community on Voluntary Helping and Prosocial Action," chap. 12 in *The Psychology of Prosocial Behavior: Group Processes, Intergroup Relations, and Helping*, ed. Stefan Stürmer and Mark Snyder (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 223–43; Samuel L. Gaertner et al., "Reducing Intergroup Conflict: From Superordinate Goals to Decategorization, Recategorization, and Mutual Differentiation," *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice* 4, no. 1 (2000): 98–114, https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2699.4.1.98.

[31] Roy F. Baumeister, Arlene M. Stillwell, and Todd F. Heatherton, "Guilt: An Interpersonal Approach," *Psychological Bulletin* 115, no. 2 (1994): 243–67, https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.115.2.243.

[32] Michael Chapman, et al., "Empathy and Responsibility in the Motivation of Children's Helping," *Developmental Psychology* 23 no. 1 (1987): 140–45, https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.23.1.140.

[33] Samuel P. Oliner and Pearl M. Oliner, "Promoting Extensive Altruistic Bonds: A Conceptual Elaboration and Some Pragmatic Implications," in *Embracing the Other: Philosophical, Psychological, and Historical Perspectives on Altruism*, ed. Pearl M. Oliner et al. (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 369–70; Christopher Einolf, "Does Extensivity Form Part of the Altruistic Personality? An Empirical Test of Oliner and Oliner's Theory," *Social Science Research* 39, no. 1 (2010): 142–51, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2009.02.003.

[34] Samuel P. Oliner and Pearl M. Oliner, *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe* (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 156.

[35] "You Must Love Your Neighbor as Yourself," *Watchtower*, June 15, 2014, 17–21, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/ws20140615/love-your-neighbor-as-yourself/.

[36] Danielle M. Hesse, "Disaster Preparedness and Response among Religious Organizations," (master's thesis, Graduate School of the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, 2012), https://ir-api.ua.edu/api/core/bitstreams/98b88484-57b4-40a8-bc5a-a97d22b953af/content.

[37] David Moshman, "Us and Them: Identity and Genocide," *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research* 7, no. 2 (2007): 115–35, https://doi.org/10.1080/15283480701326034.

conscientious refusal to participate in murdering those marked for extermination. Documented acts of rescue of fellow Witnesses and non-Witnesses also took place despite extreme risk.[38]

Political neutrality and nonviolence. Jehovah's Witnesses teach an ethic of nonviolence, including abstention from war, based on their reading of the first-century model of Christian practice.[39] Jehovah's Witnesses as a community have a nuanced relationship with wider society and particularly governmental authority. Witnesses believe they are obligated to respect civil authorities and obey laws, such as paying their taxes, respecting others' safety, property, and freedom, and behaving peaceably.[40] Witnesses consider it a religious requirement to obey laws even if "inconvenient, unfair, or costly to obey," as long as the laws do not require breaking God's commands.[41]

According to the biblical formulation, Christians were to be "in the world" but to be "no part of the world."[42] Witnesses are part of society in general, but they practice "political neutrality" by not engaging in voting, politics, lobbying, violent protest movements, or war.[43]

An example of the alignment of moral ideals and moral behavior under extreme conditions can be seen in the application of the teaching of political neutrality and nonviolence by Jehovah's Witnesses during World War II. From 1939 to 1945, male and female Witnesses in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan were severely repressed because of their refusal to perform emperor worship and submit to military conscription.[44]

In line with their peace ethic, Witnesses respect the right of each person to choose their way of life. For this reason, Witnesses teach that it would be wrong to force, coerce, or bribe anyone to become Jehovah's Witnesses, including their children.[45] As shown in Section 2, Figures 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, and 2.9, the process of becoming a Witness involves a period of study and the exercise of personal autonomy.

Although the survey did not attempt to measure moral behavior against stated values, such religious factors as a close relationship with God and an inner conscience socialized in biblical standards of conduct (Figures 2.9 and 2.12), as well as the supportive influence of a like-minded social group (Figure 2.13), may help narrow the gap between moral ideals and moral behavior. The findings below add further indications of the place of religion in the personal ethics of the respondents.

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[38] Jolene Chu and Tharcisse Seminega, "Jehovah's Witnesses as 'Citizens of the Kingdom of God'," in *The Routledge Handbook of Religion, Mass Atrocity, and Genocide*, ed. Sara E. Brown and Stephen D. Smith (New York: Routledge, 2021), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429317026-30; Hans Hesse, ed., *Persecution and Resistance of Jehovah's Witnesses during the Nazi-Regime, 1933–1945* (Bremen, Germany: Ed. Temmen, 2001).

[39] "Why Don't Jehovah's Witnesses Go to War?," Jehovah's Witnesses—Official Website, Frequently Asked Questions (article series), https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/why-dont-jw-go-to-war/.

[40] "Why Do Jehovah's Witnesses Maintain Political Neutrality?," Jehovah's Witnesses—Official Website, Frequently Asked Questions (article series), https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/political-neutrality/.

[41] "Are You 'Ready to Obey'?," *Watchtower,* October 2023, 8, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-october-2023/Are-You-Ready-to-Obey/.

[42] John 17:11, 14 (New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures); Raffaella Di Marzio, "Being Jehovah's Witnesses: Living in the World without Being Part of It,"*Journal of CESNUR* 4, no. 6 (2020): 69–91, https://cesnur.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/tjoc_4_6_6_dimarzio.pdf; see also Chu and Peltonen, *Jehovah's Witnesses,* 58–59.

[43] "Is Protest the Answer?," *Awake!,* July 2013, 6–9, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/g201307/is-protest-the-answer/; Jolene Chu, "God's Things and Caesar's: Jehovah's Witnesses and Political Neutrality," *Journal of Genocide Research* 6, no. 3 (2004): 319–42, https://doi.org/10.1080/1462352042000265837.

[44] Carolyn R. Wah, "Jehovah's Witnesses and the Empire of the Sun: A Clash of Faith and Religion during World War II," *Journal of Church and State* 44, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 45–72, https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/44.1.45; Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, *Deungdaesa Incident* (museum exhibition), https://deungdaesa.org/en/.

[45] "Parents, Are You Helping Your Child Progress to Baptism?," *Watchtower*, March 2018, 8–12, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-march-2018/parents-help-your-child-to-progress-to-baptism/.

Values, Attitudes, and Priorities of Jehovah's Witnesses

Viewpoint of living by moral standards. Morals, values, and ethics form the foundation of decision-making and behavior, with personal beliefs and principles shaping one's judgments of right and wrong. To better understand how Jehovah's Witnesses view and apply moral standards in making their life decisions, the survey asked respondents to rate five statements related to their actions and beliefs in various life situations using a five-point strongly agree to strongly disagree scale, along with a "prefer not to answer" (PNA) option.

> *Many people, including myself, have learned basic human decency, such as not discriminating or harming others. However, I feel that these norms and morals have collapsed in the world we currently live in.*
>
> —Male, 30s

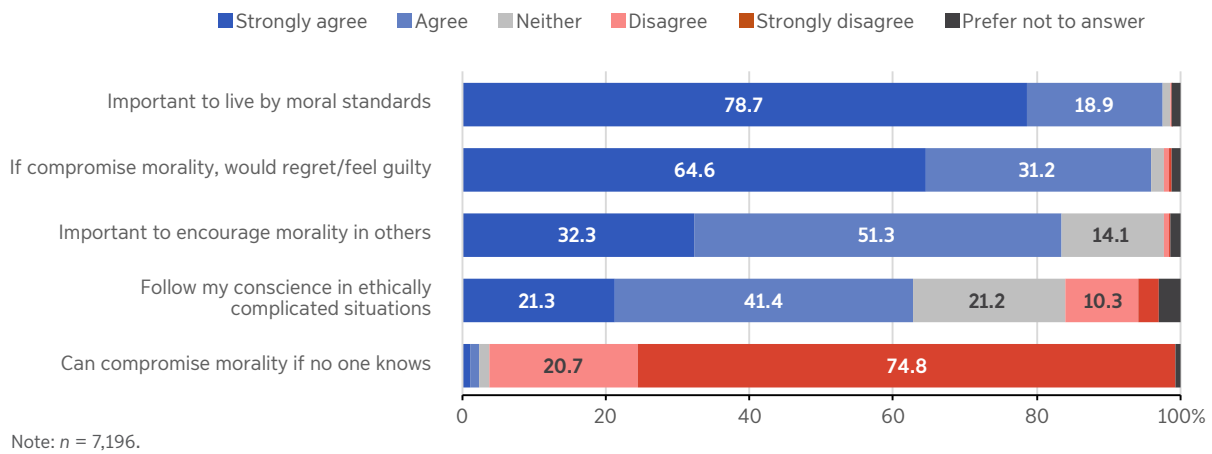
The findings presented in Figure 4.1 reveal that the majority indicated belief in adhering to moral standards. Specifically, 97.6% of respondents agreed on the importance of living according to moral standards, 95.8% indicated that they would regret or feel guilty if they compromised these standards, and 95.5% said they would not compromise their moral standards, even if such compromises would remain undiscovered. Additionally, encouraging moral behavior in others was widely supported (83.6%), though 14.1% chose "neither" agree nor disagree. In ethically complicated situations, 62.7% of respondents stated that they would follow their conscience. Relative to other questions, the lower consensus on this item and the higher rate of "neither" responses (21.2%) may suggest some ambivalence among some respondents who might prefer to consult biblical standards rather than relying solely on their own judgment of right and wrong when facing ethically complicated situations. Also, some respondents may have found it challenging to apply the question to real-life scenarios. About one tenth (13.1%) disagreed. A similar overall pattern of results was observed across different genders and age groups.

Life priorities. To understand life priorities among Jehovah's Witnesses, the survey asked respondents to rate 16 items (e.g., personal safety/needs, family happiness) on a five-point scale ranging from "not a priority at all" to "essential priority," with PNA and "does not apply" (DNA) options. For comparative analysis, the items were grouped into two categories: self-focused and other-focused priorities.

Figure 4.2 shows how respondents prioritized self-focused items. Respondents considered the following

Figure 4.1. Viewpoint of living by moral standards

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about questions of morality?



Note: *n* = 7,196.

as “moderate,” “high,” or “essential” priority: “personal safety and needs” (93.0%), “freedom, independence” (72.5%), and “high-quality education, new knowledge, mastering abilities and skills” (60.1%).

Approximately half of the respondents rated certain self-focused items as “moderate” to “essential” priorities, while the other half assigned them “low” or no priority. For example, 48.4% prioritized “material goods” versus 49.7% who did not; 45.9% prioritized “personal success, reaching goals” against 46.4% who did not; and 40.3% considered “interesting jobs, hobbies” a priority compared with 52.9% who did not.

“Career advancement” was rated as a low or no priority by 80.0% of the respondents. It is worth noting that 17.1% of respondents indicated that this item did not apply to them, particularly among older adults in the sample. The majority opinion could reflect the religion’s emphasis on balancing material and religious pursuits.

Among priorities reported higher in male respondents were “high-quality education, new knowledge, mastering abilities and skills” (male, 68.5%; female, 56.7%) and “interesting jobs, hobbies” (male, 51.8%; female, 35.6%). Priorities that were rated higher by female respondents included “personal safety and needs” (female, 94.0%; male, 90.5%).

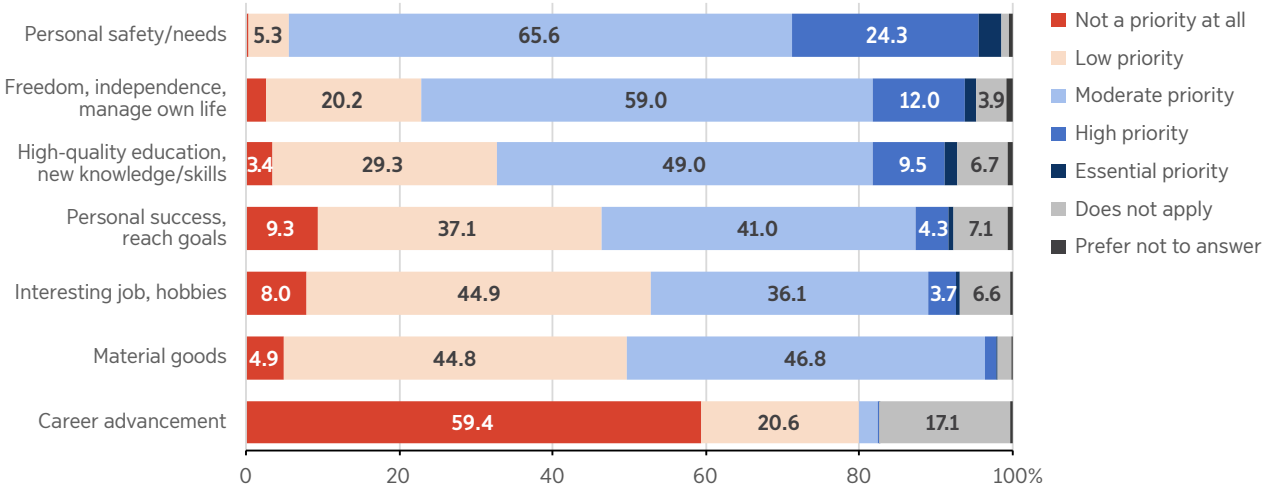
Some priorities decreased with age, likely because they became less relevant: “material goods” (54.1% for young adults, 50.5% for middle-aged adults, and 45.2% for older adults); “interesting jobs, hobbies” (58.3% for young adults, 44.0% for middle-aged adults, and 32.0% for older adults); and “personal success, reaching goals” (57.3% for young adults, 48.6% for middle-aged adults, and 40.5% for older adults).

The most notable priorities for parents of minors in comparison with the total sample were “material goods” (59.7% compared with 48.4% of the total sample) and “high-quality education” (70.9% compared with 60.1% of the total sample), possibly reflecting their interest in providing for their dependent minors.

The data show varied self-focused priorities among individuals within the JW community, perhaps shaped in part by age, circumstances, life achievements, background, or other factors.

Figure 4.2. Self-focused life priorities

How much are each of the following priorities in your life?



Note: *n* = 7,196.

The top three self-focused life priorities were personal safety, individual freedom, and quality education.

My relationship with God is very important to me.

—Male, 30s

I thank Jehovah [God] that I am still active and able to do my chores.

—Female, 80s

Figure 4.3 shows how respondents prioritized other-focused items. The results indicate that most respondents prioritized (as moderate, high, or essential priority) items related to family and spiritual matters. A near-unanimous 99.2% prioritized "serving God and obeying his commands," and likewise, 99.2% prioritized maintaining "a clean conscience, living by moral standards." Family well-being and interpersonal relationships were priorities for most participants: "showing respect to others" (99.0%), "family happiness" (96.7%), "family harmony" (95.2%), and "keeping a clean home" (95.2%).

The findings also highlight views about supporting vulnerable individuals, with respondents prioritizing "helping those in need, caring for the weak ones" (97.7%).

My husband passed away after battling three types of cancer . . . I am grateful for the kind support offered by many fellow believers.

—Female, 80s

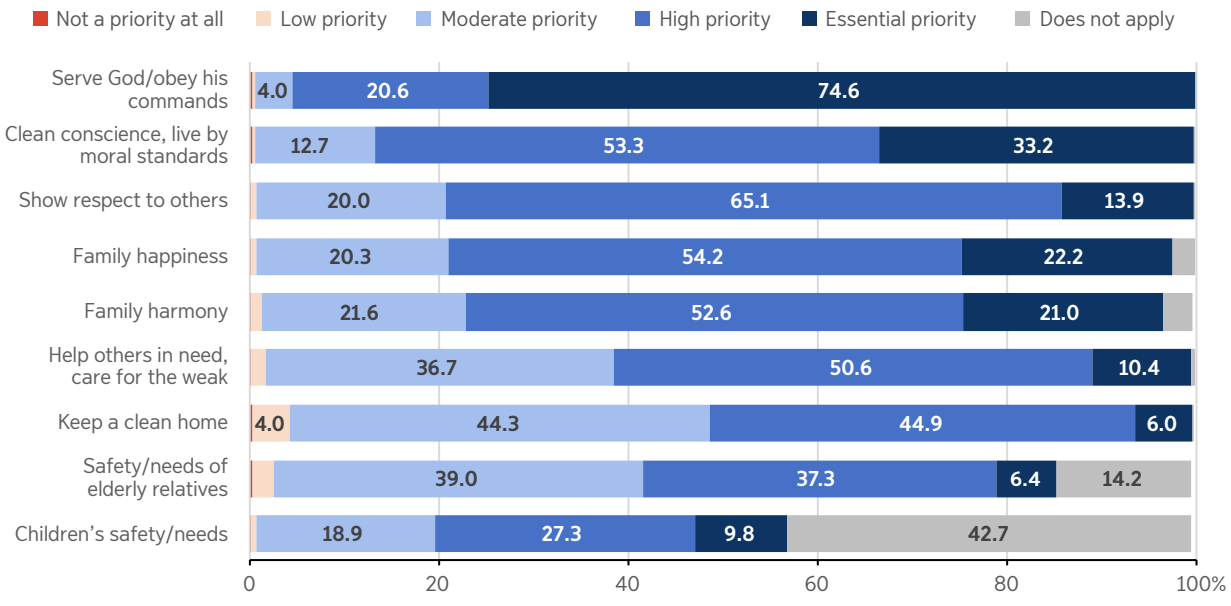
After excluding the substantial proportion of "does not apply" responses to the items about safety of children and the elderly, the data were recalculated. The revised analysis indicates a high prioritization of "children's safety and needs" (97.8%) and "safety and needs of elderly relatives" (96.3%).

These findings demonstrate how Jehovah's Witnesses prioritize both personal well-being and caring for the needs of their family and others.

If I had not studied the Bible, I might have prioritized myself over my family. But I have learned that, as the head of the family, it is important to put the physical, mental, and emotional needs of my wife and children first.

—Male, 40s

Figure 4.3. Other-focused life priorities



Note: *n* = 7,196.

Respondents prioritized religion, family life, and helping others over self-focused items.

Life concerns. To identify main concerns of those in the faith community of Jehovah's Witnesses, the survey asked respondents to rate the extent of their concern about 15 items on a five-point scale from "not at all concerned" to "extremely concerned," with a PNA option. The items are listed with respondents' ratings in Figure 4.4.

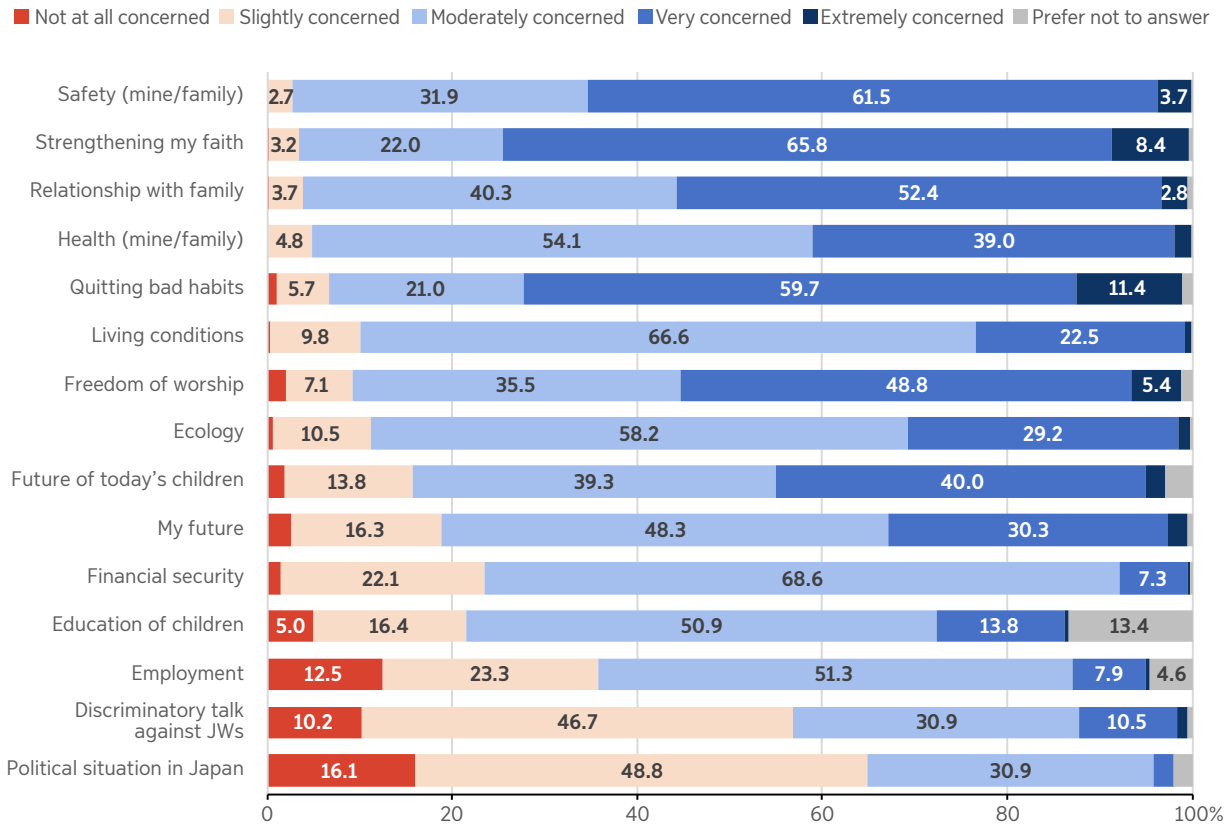
Moderate to extreme concerns among respondents were safety for themselves and their family (97.1%), strengthening their faith (96.2%), relationship with family (95.5%), and health for themselves and their family (95.1%). Other important concerns included quitting bad habits (92.1%), the future of today's children (81.4%), their own future (80.6%), and children's education (65.2%), while a smaller group of respondents ranked themselves "slightly concerned" about children's education (16.4%), their own future (16.3%), and the future of today's children (13.8%). Regarding children's education, 13.4% preferred not to answer.

Uncertainty over financial matters was highlighted by moderate to extreme concerns over "living conditions" (89.7%), "financial security" (76.3%), and "employment" (59.6%). The employment figure was limited by the cohort of older adults, who comprised most of the 35.8% reporting employment as not of high concern, possibly due to its lack of relevance. Some respondents expressed slight concern about their "financial security" (22.1%) and "living conditions" (9.8%).

> *I want to take care of my family's well-being in a challenging world.*
>
> —Male, 40s

Figure 4.4. Life concerns

To what extent are you concerned about each of the following?



Note: *n* = 7,196.

Broader moderate to extreme societal concern was also reported regarding ecology (88.6%) and the political situation in Japan (33.1%). Nearly one tenth (10.5%) were only "slightly concerned" about ecological issues, and almost half (48.8%) reported slight concern regarding Japan's politics, with 16.1% indicating no concern at all.

Societal topics with more direct impact on the sample population were related specifically to their religious beliefs. A majority of respondents (89.7%) reported they were moderately, very, or extremely concerned about "freedom of worship," while 7.1% were slightly concerned.

Reports of discriminatory remarks about Jehovah's Witnesses showed varying levels of concern, with moderate to extreme (42.6%), slight (46.7%), and no concern (10.2%).

> *I am heartbroken by the recent negative campaign and reports against Jehovah's Witnesses.*
>
> —Female, 40s

The greatest gender difference was reported in the emphasis on employment by males (67.7%) compared with females (56.3%).

Within highest differences across age groups, 72.6% of middle-aged adults reported more concern about employment compared with 68.1% of younger adults and 47.2% of older adults. Concern about the future of today's children was more pronounced for middle-aged adults (82.0%) and older adults (83.6%) than for young adults (72.5%). Concern about ecology was higher for older adults (90.7%) and middle-aged adults (88.8%), compared with young adults (81.3%).

Civic Responsibility and Political Neutrality

Willingness to help others. Attitudes and values can also motivate prosocial behaviors. The survey explored the extent to which Jehovah's Witnesses saw themselves as being willing to extend help to those inside and outside their immediate social group. The question presented nine types of people, each requiring urgent assistance, and asked respondents to indicate the likelihood that they would provide help. The response options ranged from "I definitely won't help" to "I will definitely help," with a PNA option included.

> *We had the opportunity to show kindness by sheltering [our neighbors] in our home during earthquakes. We are building good neighborly relationships so that they have a positive impression of us without needing to talk about the Bible.*
>
> —Female, 60s

The majority of respondents expressed a willingness to help all types of persons in need, regardless of their situation or religious affiliation. Combining "most likely, I will help" and "I will definitely help," 98.7% reported willingness to help "someone who shares [their] religious beliefs," "someone of another religion" (95.2%), and "someone who has left the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses" (81.8%).

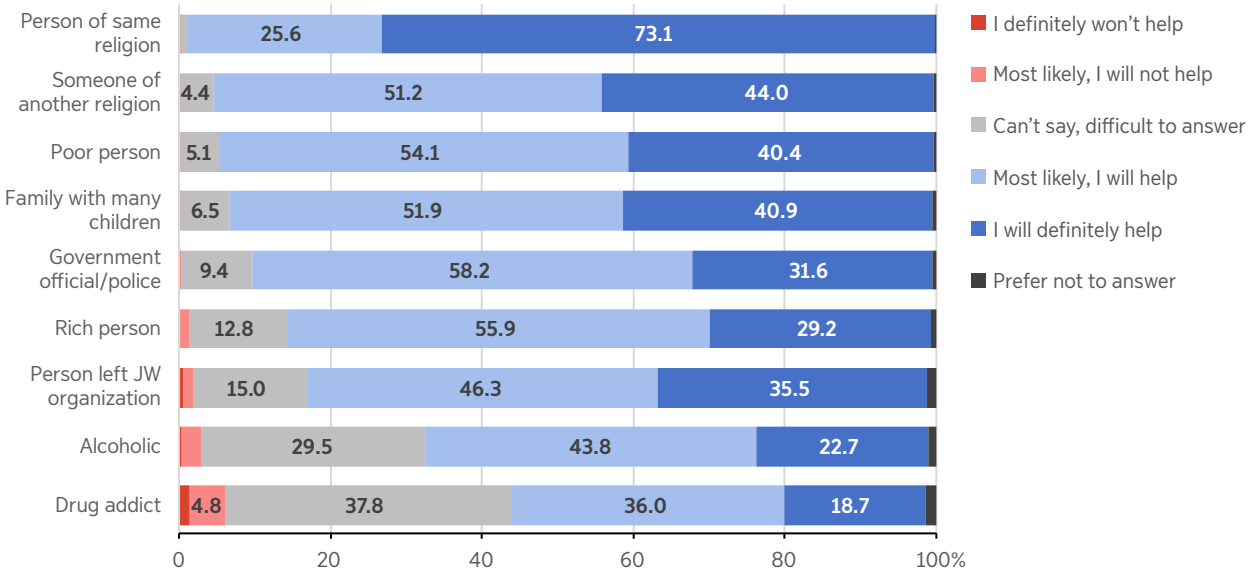
> *We learn from the biblical story of the good Samaritan that we need to be good neighbors to those around us.*
>
> —Male, 40s

> *From my childhood, I was taught to respect, help, and serve others.*
>
> —Female, 30s

Results show a willingness to definitely or most likely extend help to particular groups in society as follows: "family with many children" (92.8%), "poor person" (94.5%), "government official or police" (89.8%), as well as an "alcoholic" (66.5%) or "drug addict" (54.7%). On the latter two items, more respondents chose "can't say/difficult to answer" regarding helping a drug addict (37.8%) or an alcoholic (29.5%), perhaps out of safety concerns or viewing the condition as self-imposed. Ambivalence was also expressed by respondents who chose "can't say/difficult to answer" regarding helping someone who has left the organization (15.0%), a rich person (12.8%), or government official or police (9.4%). Regarding drug addicts, the combined responses "I definitely won't help" and "most likely, I will not help" amounted to 6.1%; and 3.0% expressed similar sentiments about alcoholics.

Figure 4.5. Willingness to help others

If you saw someone in need of urgent help, whom would you help and whom would you not help?



Note: *n* = 7,196.

Most JWs would help individuals across society, including those of other faiths, government officials, and former JWs.

The most notable differences were between genders, with females more often selecting "can't say/difficult to answer" if they would help an alcoholic (32.7% females, 21.5% males) or a drug addict (41.5% females, 28.5% males), perhaps reflecting greater concern about personal safety. Older adults were also more likely to select "can't say/difficult to answer" on these items.

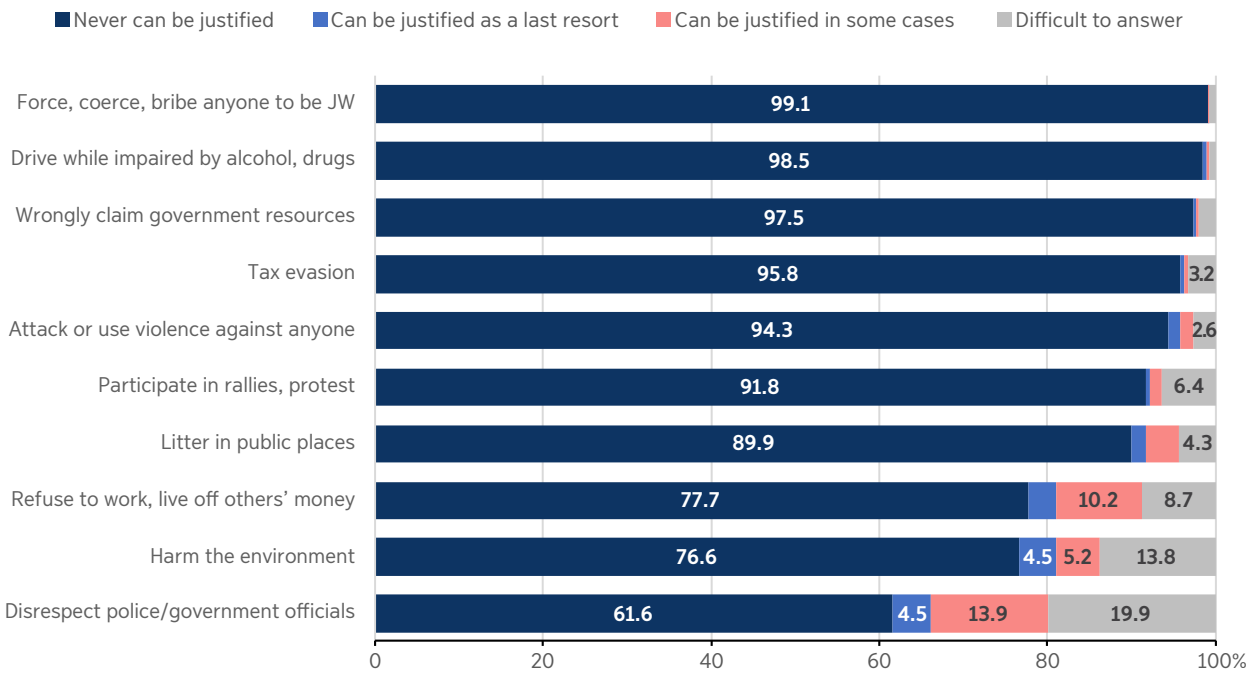
Civic responsibilities—justification of illegal or unethical acts. To assess the view of Jehovah's Witnesses on a range of civic responsibilities, the survey asked, "To what degree do you think each of the following actions can be justified?" Response options included the following: "never can be justified," "can be justified as a last resort," "can be justified in some cases," and "difficult to answer." The items covered a range of ethical and legal issues related to civic and social responsibilities.

As shown in Figure 4.6, the majority of respondents would never justify forcing, coercing, or bribing someone to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses (99.1%), driving while impaired (98.5%), wrongly claiming government resources (97.5%), evading taxes (95.8%), attacking or using violence against anyone (94.3%), or participating in rallies or protests (91.8%). These responses align with JW teachings about recognition of governmental authority and their deeply held ethic of nonviolence.

Most respondents viewed the following as unjustifiable: refusing to work and living off someone else's money (77.7%), harming the environment (76.6%), and disrespecting police or government officials (61.6%). However, some believed they could justify in some cases refusing to work and living off someone else's money (10.2%), harming the environment (5.2%), and

Figure 4.6. Civic responsibilities—Justification of illegal or unethical acts

To what degree do you think each of the following actions can be justified?



Note: *n* = 7,196.

disrespecting police or government officials (13.9%). Notable portions found these issues difficult to answer—8.7%, 13.8%, and 19.9% respectively.

Gender and age subgroup analyses mirrored overall trends. In some instances, differences were observed in "difficult to answer" and "can be justified in some cases" responses. Regarding gender, females were more likely than males to respond "difficult to answer" to the statement "disrespect police/government officials" (females, 22.3%; males, 14.1%). Among age groups, the young adults cohort felt that refusing to work and living off others' money "can be justified in some cases," more so than older age categories (young adults, 15.0%; middle-aged adults, 9.8%; and older adults, 9.1%).

In summary, the results revealed broad consensus on the stance of Jehovah's Witnesses against unethical civic behaviors, such as tax evasion, coercing others to accept religious beliefs, impaired driving, or violent acts.

I highly appreciate the work done by police officers and believe their role is crucial.

—Male, 40s

Social and political positions of nonviolence and political neutrality. The study investigated the position of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan on nonviolence and political neutrality. Since this long-held religious stance involves the Witness community's relationship with the State, the survey inquired about respondents' attitudes toward the practice of political neutrality in various situations. Respondents were asked to rate (strongly agree-strongly disagree) six statements focused on political neutrality, nonviolence, and their attitudes toward governmental laws, along with a PNA option.

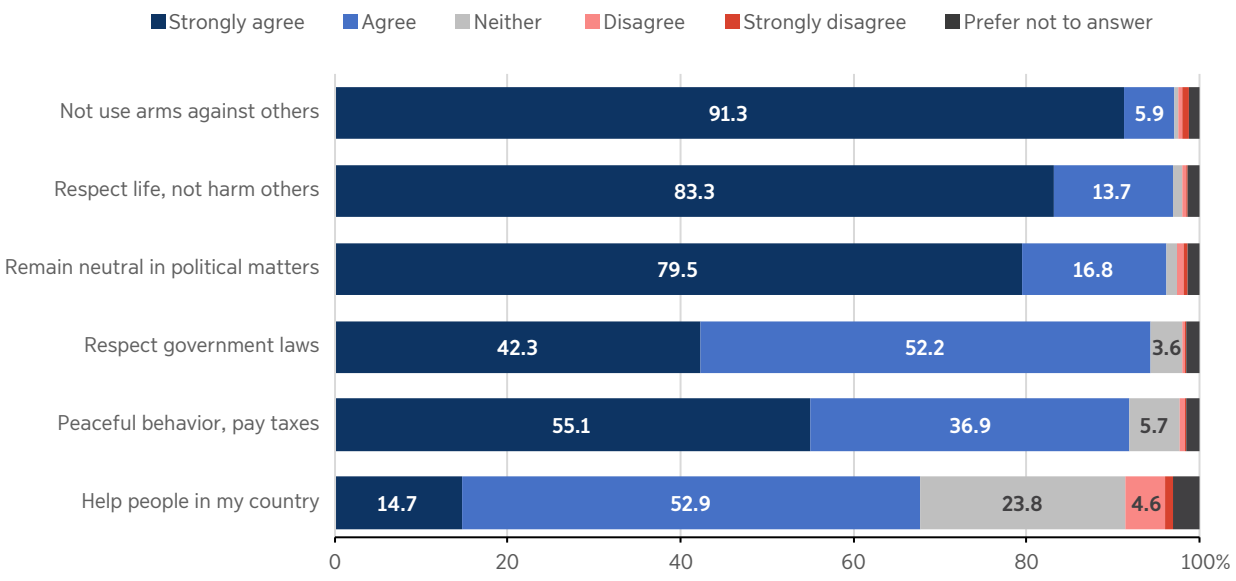
Figure 4.7 shows consistency among respondents with a majority expressing their agreement on key statements, including "I don't want to use arms against others" (97.2%), "I respect life and have decided not to take part in any activities where others can be harmed" (97.0%), "I remain neutral in political matters" (96.3%), "I respect the laws established by the government" (94.5%), "I help my country by my peaceful behavior and by paying my taxes" (92.0%), and "I want to help people in my country" (67.6%). For the last item, 23.8% indicated a neutral stance of "neither," and less than 6% disagreed. A pattern similar to the overall sample results was reported among gender and age groups. Nuances between groups, in some instances, were observed in "neither" and PNA responses.

Studying the Bible has guided me to live a morally upright life. As a resident of Japan, I feel that I am positively contributing to the harmony and order of my community.

—Male, 30s

Figure 4.7. Social and political positions of nonviolence and political neutrality

Do you agree with the following statements about political issues?



Note: *n* = 7,196.

JWs maintain political neutrality by avoiding the use of arms and political involvement while still respecting laws and helping others.

Conclusion

Analysis of personal priorities, values, and attitudes indicates Jehovah's Witnesses' attitudes toward moral standards and personal integrity. Their priorities include personal safety, independence, and high-quality education, maintaining family happiness and harmony, and respecting others. This pattern reflects a concern for both personal fulfillment and the collective well-being of their community and society as a whole.

Respondents reported being more focused on others than themselves, a viewpoint associated with a collectivist culture rather than an individualist one. Religious priorities involved obedience to God, strengthening of one's faith, living by moral standards, and following one's conscience.

In line with findings presented in the previous section regarding family functioning and satisfaction, the centrality of familial bonds was further evidenced by the prioritization of family harmony and happiness, along with the safety and needs of children and the elderly.

Illegal and unethical acts, such as driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs and unlawfully claiming government benefits, were deemed "never justified." While Jehovah's Witnesses consider it an expression of benevolence to encourage others toward morality, they believe there to be no justification for forcing, coercing, or bribing anyone to adopt their faith. As shown in Sections 2 and 3, the majority affirmed respect for personal autonomy and freedom of choice.

Although having a strong sense of group identity, respondents expressed an inclusive willingness to extend help to those in need, regardless of religious, social, or economic background. Consistent with the religion's teaching on nonviolence and political neutrality, respondents expressed a strong rejection of violent behavior. This moral position is reinforced by a respect for life and governmental laws.

These findings provide insight into how Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan perceive the integration of personal and community values into their daily lives.

SECTION FIVE

Health and Well-Being

This section presents findings related to the physical health and mental well-being of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan, their attitudes regarding medical care, and their self-reported psychosocial outlook on life.

The findings address these questions:

- How do Jehovah's Witnesses view medical advice and the seeking of medical care for themselves or their children?
- How do they rate their current health condition and health habits?
- How do they view medical professionals and various medical treatments for themselves or their children?
- What is their view of blood transfusions for themselves or their children?
- What changes in psychological outlook do they report since becoming Jehovah's Witnesses?
- How do they rate their outlook toward past, present, and future life, and their life satisfaction?

The following literature review begins with a summary of attitudes of the general population in Japan toward health care, as well as shifting trends in the physician-patient relationship. Self-reported data from the general population are noted on health condition and habits, as well as references to studies on religious populations. The question of medical treatments is discussed, particularly blood transfusions, which Jehovah's Witnesses generally refuse for religious reasons. For context, references are included on the current state of scientific research regarding blood-based treatments. The overview of literature on the psychological measures used in the JWJ-QS survey connects findings from earlier sections of this report, referencing studies on the link between religion and physical and mental health and well-being.[1] Cross-cultural data from surveys of Jehovah's Witness populations in Kazakhstan and Rwanda are referenced.

Attitudes about Medical Care, Health Habits, and Medical Treatments

Attitudes about medical care. Japan, one of the world's wealthiest countries, has one of the highest rates of life expectancy.[2] A key contributor to longevity and the quality of life is the availability and accessibility of quality medical care.[3] The Japanese government provides universal and relatively affordable health-care coverage.

Despite these strengths, the health-care system faces significant challenges. The "super aging" of the Japanese population translates into a need for more medical professionals and greater collaboration between various specialists to address the challenges

[1] In this connection, the literature review refers several times to an exhaustive systematic analysis involving several thousand original studies on the association between religion and physical and mental health. Harold G. Koenig, a leading authority on religion and health conducted the analysis. Harold G. Koenig, "Religion, Spirituality, and Health: The Research and Clinical Implications," *International Scholarly Research Notices* 2012: Article 278730, https://doi.org/10.5402/2012/278730.

[2] World Health Organization, "Japan: Health Data Overview for Japan," https://data.who.int/countries/392.

[3] A. Nakamura et al., "Association between a New Healthcare Access Index and Life Expectancy in Japan: A Nationwide Study," *European Journal of Public Health* 34, no. S3 (November 2024): Article ckae144.233, https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckae144.233.

of patients as they age.[4] For decades, Japanese hospital physicians have managed heavy work schedules, stemming from large patient loads, as well as other demographic, organizational, and cultural factors.[5] Concern over chronic overwork and high risk of burnout among hospital physicians moved the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) in April 2024 to institute annual hour limits for doctors, though the impact of this policy change so far remains unclear.[6]

Another challenge facing doctors in Japan is the growing public demand for a more patient-centered approach to care. Historically, Japanese patients preferred that physicians make medical decisions for them,[7] reflecting a cultural norm of deference to medical authority. However, recent research indicates that satisfaction with the health-care system in Japan goes beyond questions of the availability and affordability of health care, and professional competence. Japanese patients increasingly favor patient-centered care[8]—involving patient autonomy,[9] clear communication and patient access to information,[10] informed consent,[11] and access to second opinions.[12]

Traditionally, doctors in Japan have a high level of authority, often operating under a "beneficence-based model of medical ethics."[13] This model prioritizes beneficence by the skilled professional over patient autonomy, especially in cases of serious illness.[14] One manifestation of this approach has been the prevailing view that physicians should decide how much medical information is disclosed to the patient.[15] Due to lack

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[4] Ryohei Goto and Junji Haruta, "Current Status of Interprofessional Competency among Healthcare Professions in Japan: A Cross-Sectional Web-Based Survey," *Journal of General and Family Medicine* 24, no. 2 (2023): 119–25, https://doi.org/10.1002/jgf2.601.

[5] Soichi Koike et al., "Working Hours of Full-Time Hospital Physicians in Japan: A Cross-Sectional Nationwide Survey," *BMC Public Health* 24 (2024): Article 164, https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-17531-5.

[6] Masatoshi Ishikawa et al., "Impact of Japan's 2024 Physician Work Style Reform on Pediatricians' Working Hours and Associated Factors," *Healthcare* 13, no. 15 (2025): Article 1815, https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare13151815; Masatoshi Ishikawa, "Relationships between Overwork, Burnout and Suicidal Ideation among Resident Physicians in Hospitals in Japan with Medical Residency Programmes: A Nationwide Questionnaire-Based Survey," *BMJ Open* 12, no. 3 (2022): Article e056283, https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2021-056283; Kiyoshi Shikino et al., "Optimal Working Hours in the 2024 Physician Work Reform: Insights from a Residency Program Director," *Advances in Medical Education Practice* 16 (2025): 1461–68, https://doi.org/10.2147/AMEP.S540698.

[7] Tatsuro Ishizaki et al., "Participation Preference in Therapeutic Decision" [in Japanese], *Igaku No Ayumi* 166, no. 7/8 (1993): 585–86.

[8] Masako Okamura et al., "Patients' Perceptions of Patient-Centered Communication with Healthcare Providers and Associated Factors in Japan – The INFORM Study 2020," *Patient Education and Counseling* 122 (2024): Article 108170, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pec.2024.108170.

[9] Miki Hayashi et al., "Respecting Autonomy in Difficult Medical Settings: A Questionnaire Study in Japan," *Ethics & Behavior* 10, no. 1 (2000): 51–63, https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327019EB1001_4; "2019 Survey on Healthcare in Japan" [Research Report], Health and Global Policy Institute, published December 16, 2019, https://hgpi.org/en/research/hc-survey-2019.html; Kyoko Nomura et al., "Patient Autonomy Preferences among Hypertensive Outpatients in a Primary Care Setting in Japan," *Internal Medicine* 46, no. 17 (2007): 1403–8, https://doi.org/10.2169/internalmedicine.46.0141; Ulrike Schaede et al., "Shared Decision-Making in Patients with Prostate Cancer in Japan: Patient Preferences Versus Physician Perceptions," *Journal of Global Oncology* 4 (2018): 1–9, https://doi.org/10.1200/JGO.2016.008045.

[10] R. B. Leflar, "The Cautious Acceptance of Informed Consent in Japan," *Medicine and Law* 16, no. 4 (1997): 705–20, PMID: 9573708; Laura Specker Sullivan, "Dynamic Axes of Informed Consent in Japan," *Social Science & Medicine* 174 (2017): 159–68, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.12.031; Sakiko Masaki, Hiroko Ishimoto, and Atsushi Asai, "Contemporary Issues Concerning Informed Consent in Japan Based on a Review of Court Decisions and Characteristics of Japanese Culture," *BMC Medical Ethics* 15 (2014): Article 8, https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6939-15-8.

[11] Atsushi Asai, "Barriers to Informed Consent in Japan," *Eubios Journal of Asian and International Bioethics* 6, no. 4 (1996): 91–93, https://www.eubios.info/EJ64/EJ64B.htm.

[12] Akihito Hagihara et al., "A Signal Detection Approach to Patient-Doctor Communication and Doctor Shopping Behaviour among Japanese Patients," *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice* 11, no. 6 (2005): 556–67, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2753.2005.00581.x; Sawako Okamoto et al., "Values and Risks of Second Opinion in Japan's Universal Health-Care System," *Health Expectations* 18, no. 5 (2015): 826–38, https://doi.org/10.1111/hex.12055; T. Sato et al., "Second Opinion Behaviour among Japanese Primary Care Patients," *British Journal of General Practice* 49, no. 444 (1999): 546-50, PMID: 10621989.

[13] Tom L. Beauchamp, "Promise of the Beneficence Model for Medical Ethics," *Journal of Contemporary Health Law and Policy* 6, no. 1 (1990): Article 11, Catholic Law Scholarship Repository, https://scholarship.law.edu/jchlp/vol6/iss1/11. For a discussion of the impact of Beauchamp's scholarship on the shift toward patient-centered care, please see Jalayne J. Arias and Leslie E. Wolf, "Honoring a Lasting Impact: Dr. Tom Beauchamp," *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* 53, no. 2 (2025): 331–32, https://doi.org/10.1017/jme.2025.10134.

[14] Atsushi Asai, Taketoshi Okita, and Seiji Bito, "Discussions on Present Japanese Psychocultural-Social Tendencies as Obstacles to Clinical Shared Decision-Making in Japan," *Asian Bioethics Review* 14 (2022): 133–50, https://doi.org/10.1007/s41649-021-00201-2; Hayashi et al., "Respecting Autonomy in Difficult Medical Settings."

[15] Asai, "Barriers to Informed Consent in Japan."

of information, as well as cultural restraints against appearing doubtful about or dissatisfied with their current care, many patients in Japan either hesitate to seek a second opinion, or they do so without informing their primary physician, inhibiting collaboration within the medical team.[16]

Sekimoto et al. (2004) noted that earlier studies about patients and medical decisions failed to distinguish between two related but different elements: "problem-solving" (e.g., diagnosis, treatment options, risks, benefits, probable outcomes), which requires medical expertise, and "decision-making," which involves patient participation once care and treatment options have been defined. Sekimoto et al. found that "Japanese patients have positive attitudes towards participation in medical decision-making, provided they are fully informed of the nature of the disease, the treatment options, and the risks and benefits of the options."[17]

One additional factor in the transformation of the patient-physician relationship is the ability of patients to conduct online research and form peer support groups, which are contributing to a cultural shift from "a traditional asymmetrical relationship (in which the healthcare professionals are in a dominant position) to a cooperative relationship on a more equal footing."[18]

The growing demand for greater physician-patient interaction also suggests a desire for physician empathy, which has been shown to benefit both patient and doctor.[19] General practitioners in Japan reportedly have higher levels of empathy than do technical specialists, such as surgeons and anesthesiologists.[20] Among medical professionals in Japan, greater empathy was found among generalists and the rapidly growing ranks of female doctors, as well as medical students, and nurses.[21]

In summary, factors influencing levels of satisfaction with doctors include their relative involvement with their patients, familiarity with patients' medical history, time spent in consultation, and answers to patients' questions.[22] These evolving expectations, combined with factors limiting doctors' ability to meet those expectations, may contribute to lower trust in doctors in Japan. In one survey of 28 countries, doctors received an overall trust rating of 59%. Japan's rating was 43%, one of four countries where less than half the population trust doctors.[23] These low ratings in Japan may be affected by cultural influences when choosing survey responses. (See "Health condition and habits" below.)

In connection with medical treatment of children, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that "the best interests of the child

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[16] Okamoto et al., "Values and Risks of Second Opinion"; Sato, "Second Opinion Behaviour."

[17] Miho Sekimoto et al., "Patients' Preferences for Involvement in Treatment Decision Making in Japan," *BMC Family Practice* 5 (2004): Article 1, under Conclusion, https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2296-5-1.

[18] Miwako Hosoda, "Transforming the Patient-Provider Relationship through Digitalized Peer Support in Japan," *Health Systems & Reform* 10, no. 2 (2024): Article 2392306, https://doi.org/10.1080/23288604.2024.2392306.

[19] Xin Zhang et al., "Physician Empathy in Doctor-Patient Communication: A Systematic Review," *Health Communication* 39, no. 5 (2023): 1027–37, https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2023.2201735.

[20] Hitomi U. Kataoka et al., "Measurement and Correlates of Empathy among Female Japanese Physicians," *BMC Medical Education* 12 (2012): Article 48, https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6920-12-48; Tomoe Otsuka et al., "Empathy among Physicians and Nurses in Japan: A Nationwide Cross-Sectional Study," *Journal of General Internal Medicine* 39 (2024): 960–68, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-024-08620-1; Takashi Watari et al., "Empathy Competence and Future Specialty among Medical Residents in Japan: A Nationwide Cross-Sectional Study," *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): Article 13742, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-41011-w.

[21] Watari, "Empathy Competence."

[22] Masako Ii and Bing Niu, "Are Japanese People Satisfied with Their Health Care System and Services? Empirical Evidence from Survey Data," *Health Policy* 123, no. 4 (2019): 345–52, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthpol.2018.11.008. The other countries surveyed were Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

[23] *Ipsos Global Trustworthiness Index 2022*, "Doctors and Scientists Are Seen as the World's Most Trustworthy Professions," August 1, 2022, https://www.ipsos.com/en/global-trustworthiness-index-2022. The four countries with lowest ratings were Poland (39%), Hungary (40%), Japan (43%), and Korea (43%).

shall be a primary consideration."[24] The "best interests of the child principle" has been called "one of the most widely discussed principles of medical ethics and human rights."[25] While parents and guardians are generally responsible for making health-care decisions for their children until age 18, the age of consent for medical treatment varies, with some laws recognizing the rights of mature minors, and others, such as in Spain, allowing children to make health-care decisions beginning at age 16.[26]

Little research is available about minors and medical decision-making in Japan. An online survey about pediatric medical research showed that in Japan, "although many parents favored collaborative decision-making between parents and children, they also wanted parents' will to be reflected in the decision."[27] The older the child, the more parents of minors believed their children should be consulted, with a small percentage responding that a child 15 to 18 years old should be the one to decide whether to participate in medical research.[28]

Health condition and habits. The JWJ-QS survey instrument included a single-item measure of self-reported current health, a common method in survey research, with satisfactory validity.[29] At 84.5 years, Japan has one of the highest life expectancies in the world. Yet self-reported assessments among Japanese about their health tend to be lower as compared with other high-income countries, with over half of Japanese rating their health as "fair" or worse.[30] However, Tanaka et al. (2023) noted that respondents in Japan "often choose the mid-point" among survey options, and the word "fair" in the Japanese language has positive connotations. The researchers suggested this cultural tendency as one explanation for the prevalence of low health ratings in Japan among those of higher socioeconomic status and the highly educated, contrary to findings in 33 other countries. Though older Japanese adults face increasing health challenges, among adults over age 65, the overall health condition of this cohort is better than those over age 65 in the previous two decades.[31]

Among 50 studies that included different religious groups in various countries, 29 (58%) found that religion and spirituality were associated with better subjectively rated health, though causality or directionality remains a question for further research.[32] The religious literature published by Jehovah's Witnesses regularly discusses the benefits of good nutrition,

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[24] UN General Assembly, Resolution 44/25, Convention on the Rights of the Child (November 20, 1989), under Article 3, https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child.

[25] Julian W. März, "What Does the Best Interests Principle of the Convention on the Rights of the Child Mean for Paediatric Healthcare?," *European Journal of Pediatrics* 181 (2022): 3805–16, https://doi.org/10.1007/s00431-022-04609-2.

[26] J. Peter de Winter, Jaan Toelen, and Gregorio Paolo Milani, "Empowering Young Voices: Navigating the Complexities of Minors in Healthcare Decisions," *European Journal of Pediatrics* 183 (2024): 2515–16, https://doi.org/10.1007/s00431-024-05524-4; Francisco Rodríguez-Domínguez et al., "Involvement and Autonomy of Minors in Medical Settings: Perceptions of Children Undergoing Surgery and Parents," *Children* 10, no. 12 (2023): Article 1844, https://doi.org/10.3390/children10121844.

[27] Yasue Fukuda and Koji Fukuda, "Parents' Attitudes Towards and Perceptions of Involving Minors in Medical Research from the Japanese Perspective," *BMC Med Ethics* 19 (2018): Article 91, under Results, https://doi.org/10.1186/s12910-018-0330-1.

[28] Fukuda and Fukuda, "Parents' Attitudes."

[29] Sarah E. Dumas et al., "A Comparison of the Four Healthy Days Measures (HRQOL-4) with a Single Measure of Self-Rated General Health in a Population-Based Health Survey in New York City," *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes* 18 (2020): Article 315, https://doi.org/10.1186/s12955-020-01560-4; Adam B. Smith et al., "The Validity of Single-Item Measures of Health-Related Quality of Life across Groups Differing in Acute Respiratory Symptom Severity," *Quality of Life Research* 33 (2024): 2773–80, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11136-024-03694-0.

[30] Anna-Carolina Haensch et al., "Pandemic Response Survey," Version 1.0.0 (2024), GESIS (Cologne, Germany), https://search.gesis.org/research_data/SDN-10.7802-2631?doi=10.7802/2631; Masako Ii and Bing Niu, "Are Japanese People Satisfied with Their Health Care System and Services?"

[31] Hirokazu Tanaka et al., "Socioeconomic Inequalities in Self-Rated Health in Japan, 32 European Countries and the United States: An International Comparative Study," *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health* 51, no. 8 (2022): 1161–72, https://doi.org/10.1177/14034948221092285; Shinya Ishii, Sumito Ogawa, and Masahiro Akishita, "The State of Health in Older Adults in Japan: Trends in Disability, Chronic Medical Conditions and Mortality," *PLoS ONE* 10, no. 10 (2015): Article e0139639, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0139639.

[32] Koenig, "Religion, Spirituality, and Health," under section 7.9.

exercise, and consultation with health-care professionals.[33] Witnesses do not practice faith healing.[34]

Rates of tobacco and alcohol use in Japan have been historically high, in contrast with the much rarer use of hard or soft drugs. Smoking among males in Japan ages 21 and older dropped markedly from 82.3% in 1965 to 27.8% in 2018, and among women from 16.5% to 8.7% in that same period.[35] According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2016 in Japan, 53% of males and 20% of females over age 15 reported heavy episodic drinking; the rates were highest for males, ages 15 to 19, at 67.2%.[36] A 2018 survey among Japanese college students found that 67.7% of men and 32.2% of women engaged in binge drinking.[37] Concerns over the severe health risks from heavy drinking moved Japan's MHLW in 2024 to issue its first guidelines aimed at reducing alcohol consumption.[38] Use of soft and hard drugs in Japan is very low compared with other countries. Lifetime use of any drug among the Japanese general population is estimated at 2 to 3%.[39]

In general, religious identification has been associated with reduced smoking[40] and less alcohol and recreational drug use.[41] Jehovah's Witnesses' publications have discouraged drug abuse since the 1930s, and their literature has cited scientific evidence of the health dangers of tobacco[42] and drug abuse,[43] as well as

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[33] "Ways to Improve Your Health," *Awake!*, June 2015, 2–7, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/g201506/improve-your-health/.

[34] "Do Jehovah's Witnesses Practice Faith Healing?," *Watchtower,* October 2010, 13, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/wp20101001/Do-Jehovahs-Witnesses-Practice-Faith-Healing/.

[35] "Adult Smoking Rate (JT National Smoker Rate Survey)" [in Japanese], Japan Health Promotion and Fitness Foundation, accessed September 29, 2025, https://www.health-net.or.jp/tobacco/statistics/jt.html. Cited in Kazuya Taira, Takahiro Itaya, and Sumio Fujita, "Predicting Smoking Prevalence in Japan Using Search Volumes in an Internet Search Engine: Infodemiology Study," *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 24, no. 12 (2022): Article e42619, https://doi.org/10.2196/42619.

[36] World Health Organization, *Alcohol Japan 2019 Country Profile*, January 1, 2019, https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/alcohol-jpn-2019, PDF file: "Japan: Alcohol Consumption: Levels and Patterns," https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/country-profiles/substances-abuse/jpn.pdf. "Heavy episodic drinking" refers to consuming at least 60 grams of pure alcohol at least once within the last 30 days.

[37] Kyoko Kawaida et al., "The Prevalence of Binge Drinking and Alcohol-Related Consequences and Their Relationship among Japanese College Students," *Tohoku Journal of Experimental Medicine* 254, no. 1 (2021): 41, https://doi.org/10.1620/tjem.254.41, PDF file: https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/tjem/254/1/254_41/_pdf/-char/en.

[38] "Japan Draws Up Guidelines on Alcohol Consumption," *Japan News*, February 20, 2024, https://japannews.yomiuri.co.jp/politics/politics-government/20240220-169863/.

[39] Goro Koto et al., "Drug Use, Regulations and Policy in Japan," International Drug Policy Consortium, April 14, 2020, https://idpc.net/publications/2020/04/drug-use-regulations-and-policy-in-japan.

[40] Rema Adel Afifi Soweid, Marwan Khawaja, and Mylen Tewtel Salem, "Religious Identity and Smoking Behavior among Adolescents: Evidence from Entering Students at the American University of Beirut," *Health Communication* 16, no. 1 (2024): 47–62, https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327027HC1601_4; Terrence D. Hill et al., "(Un)holy Smokes? Religion and Traditional and E-Cigarette Use in the United States," *Journal of Religion and Health* 63 (2024): 1334–59, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-022-01721-3; Koenig, "Religion, Spirituality, and Health," 8; Zhizhong Wang, Harold G. Koenig, and Saad Al Shohaib, "Religious Involvement and Tobacco Use in Mainland China: A Preliminary Study," *BMC Public Health* 15 (2015): Article 155, https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-015-1478-y.

[41] Brian J. Grim and Melissa E. Grim, "Belief, Behavior, and Belonging: How Faith is Indispensable in Preventing and Recovering from Substance Abuse," *Journal of Religion and Health* 58 (2019): 1713–50, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-019-00876-w; Koenig, "Religion, Spirituality, and Health," 6; J. Y. Park et al., "Religious Affiliation, Religious Involvement, and Alcohol Use in Korea," *Cultural Diversity and Mental Health* 4, no. 4 (1998): 291–96, https://doi.org/10.1037/1099-9809.4.4.291; Monica Roman, Klaus F. Zimmermann, and Aurelian-Petrus Plopeanu, "Religiosity, Smoking and Other Risky Behaviors," *Journal of Economics, Management and Religion* 3, no. 1 (2022), https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4460383.

[42] "Recognized by Our Conduct," chap. 13 in *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1993), 180–82, https://www.jw.org/en/library/books/Jehovahs-Witnesses-Proclaimers-of-Gods-Kingdom/Gaining-Accurate-Knowledge-of-Gods-Word-and-Applying-It/Recognized-by-Our-Conduct/; "The Tobacco Habit—Compatible with Christianity?," *Watchtower*, April 1, 1954, 201–205, https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1954242; See the series of smoking-related articles under the cover title "Death for Sale—10 Ways to Stop Smoking," *Awake!*, July 8, 1989, 3–16, https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/library/r1/lp-e/all-publications/awake/awake-1989/july-8.

[43] "How Drug Abuse Affects You and Your Neighborhood," *Awake!*, December 8, 1973, 4–5, https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/101973880; "Can the Bible Help You Overcome Drug Addiction?," Jehovah's Witnesses—Official Website, https://www.jw.org/en/library/series/more-topics/bible-about-addiction/.

alcohol abuse, although moderate alcohol consumption is viewed as acceptable.[44]

Longevity in Japan has been associated with the Japanese diet, rich in vegetables, fish, seaweed, and soy.[45] However, evidence suggests a "continuous Westernization of the Japanese diet" and rising consumption of red meats.[46] Women and older adults report healthier diets than men, especially younger men.[47] A 2023 MHLW report stated that 28.7% of adults, 20 and older, exercised twice weekly, with highest rates by older men and women, and lowest rates among young women, aged 20 to 39.[48] According to the 2024 *Global Happiness* Ipsos poll of 30 countries, Japan ranked last in satisfaction with overall physical health and well-being (45%) and second-to-last in satisfaction with exercise and physical activities.[49]

Studies of the effect of religion and spirituality on eating habits show mixed results but overall suggest a positive association between religiosity and food choices in some populations.[50] Researchers theorize that beliefs about the value of life and responsibility for self-care may positively affect diet and health.[51] Literature published by Jehovah's Witnesses aligns with this general pattern.[52]

Health checkups in Japan may be voluntary or legally mandated; for instance, companies of a certain size are required by law to arrange employee checkups. The frequency of health checkups in Japan varies widely based on a number of factors, such as health condition and habits, household and family situation, employment, insurance coverage, and accessibility.[53] Recognizing the importance and effectiveness of early

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[44] "The Growing Problem of Alcohol Abuse," *Awake!*, March 8, 1980, 5–7, https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/101980162; "Breaking the Chains of Alcohol Abuse," *Awake!*, October 8, 2005, 10–12, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/g20051008/Breaking-the-Chains-of-Alcohol-Abuse/; "Be Guided by God's View of Alcohol," *Watchtower,* December 2023, 14–17, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-december-2023/Be-Guided-by-Gods-View-of-Alcohol/.

[45] Yui Sakai et al., "Dietary Pattern Transition and Its Nutrient Intakes and Diet Quality among Japanese Population: Results from the 2003–2019 National Survey," *Public Health Nutrition* 27, no. 1 (2024): Article e231, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1368980024002027.

[46] Kentaro Murakami, M. Barbara E. Livingstone, and Satoshi Sasaki, "Thirteen-Year Trends in Dietary Patterns among Japanese Adults in the National Health and Nutrition Survey 2003–2015: Continuous Westernization of the Japanese Diet," *Nutrients* 10, no. 8 (2018): Article 994, https://doi.org/10.3390/nu10080994; Marika Nomura et al., "Current Dietary Intake of the Japanese Population in Reference to the Planetary Health Diet-Preliminary Assessment," *Frontiers in Nutrition* 10 (April 2, 2023): Article 1116105, https://doi.org/10.3389/fnut.2023.1116105.

[47] Kentaro Murakami et al., "Self-Perceived Food Literacy in Relation to the Quality of Overall Diet and Main Meals: A Cross-Sectional Study in Japanese Adults," *Appetite* 196 (2024): Article 107281, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2024.107281; Meishan Cui et al., "Self-Reported Eating Habits and Dyslipidemia in Men Aged 20–39 Years: The Japan Environment and Children's Study," *Environmental Health Preventive Medicine* 28 (2023): Article 41, https://doi.org/10.1265/ehpm.23-00008.

[48] Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), *Physical Activity Guide for Health Promotion 2023*, Health Service Bureau, January 2024, https://www.mhlw.go.jp/content/001495670.pdf.

[49] *Global Happiness 2024*, Ipsos, March 18, 2024, https://www.ipsos.com/en/global-happiness-2024; see page 23 in PDF of full report at https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2024-03/Ipsos-happinessindex2024.pdf. The poll ran approximately concurrently with the JWJ-QS survey.

[50] Ligia J. Dominguez et al., "Mediterranean Diet and Spirituality/Religion: Eating with Meaning," *Aging Clinical and Experimental Research* 36 (2024): Article 223, https://doi.org/10.1007/s40520-024-02873-w; Min-Min Tan, Carina K. Y. Chan, and Daniel D. Reidpath, "Faith, Food and Fettle: Is Individual and Neighborhood Religiosity/Spirituality Associated with a Better Diet?," *Religions* 5, no. 3 (2014): 801–13, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel5030801.

[51] Koenig, "Religion, Spirituality, and Health," 8–9.

[52] "Seven Keys to Food Safety and a Healthy Diet," Jehovah's Witnesses—Official Website, https://www.jw.org/en/library/series/more-topics/food-safety-healthy-diet/; "How Can I Have a Balanced Diet?," Jehovah's Witnesses—Official Website, https://www.jw.org/en/bible-teachings/teenagers/ask/balanced-diet/; "How Can I Lose Weight?," Jehovah's Witnesses—Official Website, https://www.jw.org/en/bible-teachings/teenagers/ask/lose-weight/; "Are You Getting Enough Exercise?," *Awake!*, May 22, 2005, 7–11, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/g20050522/Are-You-Getting-Enough-Exercise/; "Safety Tips for the Elderly," *Awake!*, February 2011, 13–15, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/g201102/Safety-Tips-for-the-Elderly/; "Ways to Improve Your Health," 2–7.

[53] Tomohiko Inui et al., "Empirical Study on the Utilization and Effects of Health Checkups in Japan," RIETI Discussion Paper Series 17-E-082, Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry, Tokyo, May 2017, https://www.rieti.go.jp/jp/publications/dp/17e082.pdf.

detection, in 2008 the MHLW launched the "Specific Health Checkups" annual screening program for high-risk populations, with a national participation rate of 53.1% as of 2020.[54] With universal health coverage, Japan has one of the highest annual rates of medical consultations among Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries.[55]

The principles of patient autonomy and informed consent in health care are supported by international and national standards such as the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), article 12,[56] the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, articles 9, 12, 25, and 26,[57] and the Council of Europe's Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (Oviedo), articles 5, 6, and 9.[58]

As noted above, attitudes toward medical practices in Japan are increasingly shifting toward patient autonomy and shared decision-making. Studies on preferences for specific medical treatments include patient attitudes toward cancer therapies,[59] organ transplants,[60] antidepressants,[61] and vitamins.[62]

A 1995 survey found that 74% of Japanese physicians would recommend blood transfusions for gastro-intestinal bleeding, but only 29% would want to be transfused themselves if they were the patient.[63] Doctors' reluctance to accept blood may have been in part because the study roughly coincided with growing public furor over a contaminated blood scandal in Japan.[64]

Research has found that patients factor their spiritual, religious, or cultural views into medical decision-making and desire health practitioners to take these views into account.[65] In Japan, low rates of organ donation and transplants have historically been attributed in part to strong negative religious and

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[54] Yoshimune Hiratsuka, Tetsuji Yokoyama, and Masakazu Yamada, "Higher Participation Rate for Specific Health Checkups Concerning Simultaneous Ophthalmic Checkups," *Journal of Epidemiology* 31, no. 5 (2021): 315, https://doi.org/10.2188/jea.JE20200052.

[55] Haruka Sakamoto et al., "Japan Health System Review," *Health Systems in Transition* 8, no. 1 (2018), World Health Organization, Regional Office for South-East Asia, https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/259941.

[56] N General Assembly, Resolution 2200A (XXI), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (December 16, 1966), https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights, PDF file: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/cescr.pdf.

[57] UN General Assembly, Resolution A/RES/61/106, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (December 12, 2006), https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities.

[58] Council of Europe, Human Rights and Biomedicine, Oveido Convention and Its Protocols, https://www.coe.int/en/web/human-rights-and-biomedicine/oviedo-convention. Treaty found at: Council of Europe, European Treaty Series – No. 164, Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with Regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine: Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine, Oviedo, Spain (April 4, 1997), https://rm.coe.int/168007cf98.

[59] Yasuo Hamamoto et al., "A Discrete Choice Experiment to Assess Treatment Preferences for Patients with Esophageal Cancer in Japan," *Esophagus* 22 (2025): 574–82, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10388-025-01143-6; Yasuo Sugitani, Kyoko Ito, and Shunsuke Ono, "Patient Preferences for Attributes of Chemotherapy for Lung Cancer: Discrete Choice Experiment Study in Japan," *Frontiers in Pharmacology* 12 (2021): Article 697711, https://doi.org/10.3389/fphar.2021.697711; Hui Sun et al., "Patient Preferences for Chemotherapy in the Treatment of Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer: A Multicenter Discrete Choice Experiment (DCE) Study in China," *Patient Preference and Adherence* 13 (2019): 1701–9, https://doi.org/10.2147/PPA.S224529.

[60] Xanat Vargas Meza and Masanori Oikawa, "Japanese Perception of Organ Donation and Implications for New Medical Technologies: Quantitative and Qualitative Social Media Analyses," *JMIR Formative Research* 8 (2024): Article e55797, https://doi.org/10.2196/55797.

[61] Shoji Yokoya et al., "A Brief Survey of Public Knowledge and Stigma towards Depression," *Journal of Clinical Medicine Research* 10, no. 3 (2018): 202–9, https://doi.org/10.14740/jocmr3282w.

[62] Tsuyoshi Chiba, Nanae Tanemura, and Chiharu Nishijima, "The Perception of Vitamins and Their Prevalence in Fortified Food and Supplements in Japan," *Nutrients* 13, no. 9 (2021): Article 3136, https://doi.org/10.3390/nu13093136.

[63] A. Asai, B. Lo, and S. Fukuhara, "Attitudes of Japanese and Japanese-American Physicians towards Life-Sustaining Treatment," *Lancet* 346, no. 8971 (August 1995): 356–59, https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(95)92230-x.

[64] Eric A. Feldman, "Blood Justice: Courts, Conflict, and Compensation in Japan, France, and the United States," *Law & Society Review* 34, no. 3 (2000): 651–701, https://doi.org/10.2307/3115140.

[65] Marcelo Borges et al., "Religious Affiliations Influence Health-Related and General Decision Making: A Brazilian Nationwide Survey," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 6 (2021): Article 2873, https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18062873; Alyssa Heric, "Religion and Spirituality in Medical Care from the Patient Perspective in Camden County, New Jersey, USA: An Exploratory Study," *Journal of Religion and Health* 63, (2024): 2895–2909, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-024-01998-6.

cultural attitudes about the removal of organs before burial, with the most negative views among older adults.[66]

Individual Jehovah's Witnesses seek good quality medical care and make their own informed health and medical decisions according to their personal circumstances and religious convictions. The religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses encourages respect for public-health guidance. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses urged compliance with government measures and made clear that there was no religious objection to vaccinations.[67] Witnesses generally respect medical professionals and their expertise, and value open dialogue about their treatment wishes and religious views.[68]

Jehovah's Witnesses accept virtually all modern medical treatments and procedures. A therapy that Witnesses find unacceptable is the transfusion of allogeneic (donor) blood, that is, the transfusion of whole blood or any of its four primary components, namely red blood cells, white cells, platelets, or plasma. They consider the transfusion of allogeneic blood to be a violation of biblical precepts concerning the sanctity of blood.[69] However, Witnesses consider procedures involving the use of their own blood during the course of therapies (such as blood cell salvage or acute normovolemic hemodilution) to be a matter of personal decision. Therefore, when receiving medical care for themselves or their children, they ask doctors to employ strategies to maximize the conservation and effective management of their own blood or that of their children, in line with their religious principles. In 2000, the Supreme Court of Japan upheld the patient's right to refuse transfusion on religious grounds.[70] Legal and medical experts in Japan continue to debate the subject of conscientious objection to medical treatment for religious reasons.[71] Further discussion of this matter is found below.

Use of Blood and Non-Blood Treatment Strategies

Refusal of blood transfusion for self and children. The primary objection of Jehovah's Witnesses to blood transfusion is religious in nature, based on biblical prohibitions found in Genesis 9:4, 5; Leviticus 17:14; and Acts 15:29. However, they often point to the scientific basis for their position. Since Witnesses regard God (Jehovah) as the Creator, they view biblical guidance on the avoidance of blood as having potential physical benefits, which is consistent with scientific findings that highlight the risks of donor blood transfusion.[72] Moreover, the tainted blood tragedies in many countries in recent decades are but one example of the numerous inherent risks of blood transfusion.

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[66] Akira Akabayashi et al., "Twenty Years after Enactment of the Organ Transplant Law in Japan: Why Are There Still So Few Deceased Donors?," *Transplantation Proceedings* 50, no. 5 (June 2018): 1209–19, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.transproceed.2018.02.078; Keita Okubo et al., "Cultural Myth vs Systemic Failure: Why Japan's Deceased Organ Donation Rate Remains Stagnant," *American Journal of Transplantation*, S1600-6135, no. 25 (2025): Article, 02846-1, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajt.2025.07.2467; Tomoko Asai, Yasuhiro Taniguchi, and Yukiyoshi Tsukata, "Individual Readiness for Transplantation Medicine of Laypersons and the Number of Deceased Organ Donors: A Cross-Sectional Online Survey in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan," *BMJ Open* 12, no. 1 (2022): Article e048735, https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2021-048735.

[67] *2021 Governing Body Update #6*, Jehovah's Witnesses—Official Website, July 16, 2021, https://www.jw.org/en/library/videos/#en/mediaitems/StudioNewsReports/docid-702021079_1_VIDEO; "Are Jehovah's Witnesses Opposed to Vaccination?," Jehovah' Witnesses—Official Website, Frequently Asked Questions (article series), https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/jw-vaccines-immunization/.

[68] "Do Jehovah's Witnesses Accept Medical Treatment?," Jehovah' Witnesses—Official Website, Frequently Asked Questions (article series), https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/jehovahs-witnesses-medical-treatment/.

[69] Tomonori Ariga, "Refusal of Blood by Jehovah's Witnesses and the Patient's Right to Self-Determination," *Legal Medicine* 11, no. S1 (2009): S138–40, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.legalmed.2009.02.005.

[70] Supreme Court of Japan, Judgments of the Supreme Court, Case No. 1998(O)1081 (February 29, 2000), *Minshu* Vol. 54, No. 2, at 582, https://www.courts.go.jp/english/Judgments/search/478/index.html.

[71] Yoshihiko Iijima, "The Ethics of Blood Transfusion Refusal in Clinical Practice among Legal and Medical Professions in Japan" [in Japanese], *Nagoya Journal of Medical Science* 82, no. 2 (2020): 193–204, https://doi.org/10.18999/nagjms.82.2.193; Hitoshi Ohto et al., "Guidelines for Managing Conscientious Objection to Blood Transfusion," *Transfusion Medicine Reviews* 23, no. 3 (2009): 221–28, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmrv.2009.03.004.

[72] "Respect the Gift of Life," chap. 13 in *What Can the Bible Teach Us?* (Wallkill, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 2015), 135–44, https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1102015153.

Medical research provides substantial scientific support for the avoidance of allogeneic blood transfusion. Large clinical studies have found that treatments using strategies to manage anemia, minimize blood loss, and preempt blood transfusion have resulted in similar or improved patient outcomes, even with complex medical or surgical procedures.[73] Many of these strategies have been incorporated into a concept known as Patient Blood Management (PBM), which refers to "a multimodal, multidisciplinary patient-centered strategy aimed at minimizing the use of blood products and improving patients' outcomes."[74] The benefits of this modern approach include reduced adverse events and complications, lower infection rates, shorter hospital and intensive care unit stays, as well as decreased short- and long-term mortality. This approach was recognized by the World Health Organization as a new standard of care in 2010.[75]

In a 2024 consensus paper in the *World Journal of Emergency Surgery,* more than 50 international experts outlined evidence-based recommendations for preventing blood loss and minimizing transfusion use in emergency general surgery and trauma care.[76] Whether patients' refusal of blood is based on religious or other reasons, PBM practitioners stress the need for careful preparation and good communication between the medical team and patient.[77] A review article described numerous nonblood strategies that can be used when patients refuse blood transfusion for religious reasons. The authors, both transfusion medicine specialists, stated that the goal of respecting patient autonomy in these cases "has spurred major advances in bloodless medicine and surgery that can be extrapolated to a broader patient population."[78] Japanese medical researchers have contributed to these advancements, for instance, in the use of blood conservation techniques.[79]

Regarding fears of contaminated blood, the issue of blood supply safety reached public consciousness when Japan joined Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the United States, and other countries in coping with scandals over HIV-contaminated blood products that

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[73] Paul J. Cummins and Federico Nicoli, "Justice and Respect for Autonomy: Jehovah's Witnesses and Kidney Transplant," *Journal of Clinical Ethics* 29, no. 4 (2018): 305–12, https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30605440/; Michael F. Leahy et al., "Improved Outcomes and Reduced Costs Associated with a Health-System-Wide Patient Blood Management Program: A Retrospective Observational Study in Four Major Adult Tertiary-Care Hospitals," *Transfusion* 57, no. 6 (2017): 1347–58, https://doi.org/10.1111/trf.14006; Katerina Pavenski et al., "ONTraC: A 20-Year History of a Successfully Coordinated Provincewide Patient Blood Management Program: Lessons Learned and Goals Achieved," *Anesthesia & Analgesia* 135, no. 3 (2022):448–58, https://doi.org/10.1213/ane.0000000000006065; Steven M Frank et al., "Methods of Bloodless Care, Clinical Outcomes, and Costs for Adult Patients Who Decline Allogeneic Transfusions," *Anesthesia & Analgesia* 135, no. 3 (2022): 576–85, https://doi.org/10.1213/ane.0000000000006114; Thomas G. DeLoughery, "Transfusion Replacement Strategies in Jehovah's Witnesses and Others Who Decline Blood Products," *Clinical Advances in Hematology & Oncology* 18, no. 12 (2020): 826–36, PMID: 33406059; Aryeh Shander and Lawrence T. Goodnough, "Objectives and Limitations of Bloodless Medical Care," *Current Opinion in Hematology* 13, no. 6 (November 2006): 462–70, https://doi.org/10.1097/01.moh.0000245692.32085.bd.

[74] Massimo Franchini et al., "Patient Blood Management: A Revolutionary Approach to Transfusion Medicine," *Blood Transfusion* 17, no. 3 (2019): 191, https://doi.org/10.2450/2019.0109-19, PDF file: https://www.bloodtransfusion.it/bt/article/view/227/230.

[75] World Health Organization, *Availability, Safety and Quality of Blood Products* (WHA63.12), May 26, 2010, https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/availability-safety-and-quality-of-blood-products-(wha63.12), PDF file: https://iris.who.int/server/api/core/bitstreams/244bd447-336e-4fc3-be1d-fd9cc55c1bdb/content. For a readable discussion of the development of PBM by its leading proponents, see Shannon L. Farmer, Irwin Gross, and Aryeh Shander, *Blood Works: An Owner's Guide: What Every Person Needs to Know before They Are a Patient* (Westport, CT: City Point Press, 2022).

[76] Federico Coccolini et al., "Strategies to Prevent Blood Loss and Reduce Transfusion in Emergency General Surgery, WSES-AAST Consensus Paper," *World Journal of Emergency Surgery* 19 (2024): Article 26, https://doi.org/10.1186/s13017-024-00554-7.

[77] DeLoughery, "Transfusion Replacement Strategies."

[78] Elizabeth P. Crowe and Robert A. DeSimone, "When Blood Transfusion Is Not an Option Owing to Religious Beliefs," *Annals of Blood* 7 (June 30, 2002), under Conclusions, https://doi.org/10.21037/aob-21-58.

[79] Yusuke Ishiwata et al., "A New Intracranial Silastic Encircling Clip for Hemostasis, Technical Note," *Journal of Neurosurgery* 73, no. 4 (1990): 638–39, https://doi.org/10.3171/jns.1990.73.4.0638; Kenichiro Kikuchi, "Religious Refusal of Transfusion," in *Anesthesiology Review 2022*, supervised by Michiaki Yamakage and Kazumi Hirota (Tokyo: Sogo Igaku Sha, 2022), 141–45; Takashi Shibata, Takamichi Murakami, and Norio Ogata, "Percutaneous Microwave Coagulation Therapy for Patients with Primary and Metastatic Hepatic Tumors during Interruption of Hepatic Blood Flow," *Cancer* 88, no. 2 (2002): 302–11, https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-0142(20000115)88:2<302::AID-CNCR9>3.0.CO;2-J; Hideto Shimpo et al., "Erythropoietin in Pediatric Cardiac Surgery: Clinical Efficacy and Effective Dose," *Chest* 111, no. 6 (June 1997): 1565–70, https://doi.org/10.1378/chest.111.6.1565; Takashi Yokota et al., "Malignant Fibrous Histiocytoma: A Method to Control Intraoperative Hemorrhage by Clamping the Feeding Arteries," *Upsala Journal of Medical Science* 104, no. 3 (1999), https://doi.org/10.3109/03009739909178966.

infected thousands of hemophiliacs in the 1980s, many of whom subsequently died of AIDS. In 1996, evidence of a cover-up led to the prosecution of Japanese pharmaceutical executives and a government official on charges of professional negligence.[80] Although blood safety regulations have tightened, continued concerns over the inherent potential for harm from allogeneic blood and advances in bloodless medical and surgical strategies prompted the United Nations World Health Organization in 2010 and 2021 to issue recommendations to minimize the use of donor blood in favor of nonblood treatments and strategies.[81]

In 2024, the World Health Organization issued *Guidance on Implementing Patient Blood Management to Improve Global Blood Health Status*. In the foreword, Dr. Yikiko Nakatani, Assistant Director-General for the WHO Access to Medicine and Health Products Division, states that "the overarching goal of PBM is to improve and maintain blood health" and that "PBM should now become part of the public health agenda . . . , ensuring that hundreds of millions of individuals can benefit from this detailed, yet practical approach to improving their blood health status." Calling PBM a "comprehensive care paradigm," the guidance document maintains that "delaying the implementation of PBM translates into increased morbidity and mortality."[82]

While Jehovah's Witnesses view the transfusion of whole blood and its four primary components (red cells, white cells, platelets, and plasma) as religiously unacceptable, they draw a distinction regarding derivatives of the four components (blood fractions). The use of minor blood fractions, such as albumin, clotting factors, or immune globulins is considered a matter of personal decision and conscience for each Witness.[83]

International human rights instruments recognize that parents are the primary decision makers regarding the health and well-being of their minor children. Children mature at different rates, along with their ability to make decisions about their health and other matters. The legal doctrine of the mature minor recognized in some countries allows minors of sufficient maturity to make their own decisions with or without parental consent. Although not specifically endorsing medical treatment decisions by mature minors, in 2024, the Council of Europe issued guidelines encouraging children's participation in decisions about their health.[84]

Regional variations in legal and medical principles may result in a Jehovah's Witness parent's or mature minor's objections to blood transfusion being overruled.[85] In such cases, the religious community encourages family members to cooperate with medical

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[80] Asako Saegusa, "Japanese Officials Were Aware of HIV in Blood Products," *Nature Medicine* 4, no. 991 (1998), https://doi.org/10.1038/1971; Eric A Feldman and Ronald Bayer, eds., "HIV and Blood in Japan: Transforming Private Conflict into Public Scandal," chap. 2 in *Blood Feuds: AIDS, Blood, and the Politics of Medical Disaster*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 59–93, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195129298.003.0003.

[81] World Health Organization, *Availability, Safety and Quality of Blood Products*; World Health Organization, *The Urgent Need to Implement Patient Blood Management: Policy Brief* (2021), https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/346655, PDF file: https://iris.who.int/server/api/core/bitstreams/22604cec-af50-4791-889b-cc8be95d26c1/content.

[82] The document describes a model for global implementation of PBM in national health-care systems, with proposed measures tailored for high- and low-income countries. It points out that savings in reduced transfusion-related costs, complications, and length of hospital stays could amount to billions of health-care dollars. World Health Organization, *Guidance on Implementing Patient Blood Management to Improve Global Blood Health Status*, 2024, v, xii, 3–5, https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/380784, PDF file: https://iris.who.int/server/api/core/bitstreams/571b33d9-6cb9-4602-a094-bfca8c5978b8/content.

[83] "Questions from Readers: Do Jehovah's Witnesses Accept Any Minor Fractions of Blood?," *Watchtower*, June 15, 2004, 29–31, https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/w20040615/Questions-From-Readers/.

[84] Council of Europe, Steering Committee for Human Rights and Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child, *Guide to Children's Participation in Decisions about Their Health* (April 2024), https://rm.coe.int/pdf-cdbio-2023-3-final-cdenf-2023-14-final-guide-child-participation-i/1680af8172.

[85] Joint Committee Guidelines on Religious Refusal of Blood Transfusion in Japan, [in Japanese], February 2008, accessed from https://yuketsu.jstmct.or.jp/wp-content/themes/jstmct/images/medical/file/guidelines/Ref13-1.pdf. See also *Management of Patients Who Refuse Blood Transfusions for Religious Reasons*, July 14, 2015 (last revision), accessed October 11, 2025, NTT Medical Center Tokyo, https://www.nmct.ntt-east.co.jp/en/aboutus/ethic/yuketu/.

services.[86] On the other hand, the mature minor child of a Jehovah's Witness parent may willingly accept a blood transfusion, contrary to the parent's religious view. Although no literature by Jehovah's Witnesses was found that specifically addresses this scenario, their publications stress the importance of continued parental warmth and support even if adolescent children hold different opinions about religious beliefs.[87]

Since 1988, support for Jehovah's Witnesses interested in medical treatment without blood transfusion has been available through Hospital Information Services (HIS) at the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses. HIS coordinates a global network of Hospital Liaison Committees (HLCs), composed of volunteers who are trained to communicate with health-care professionals.[88] At the request of Witness patients, the HLC may help locate qualified doctors who will respect the patient's religious views and who are familiar with clinical strategies for preempting blood transfusion.[89] HLCs deliver presentations to professional medical staff highlighting evidence-based treatment strategies that preempt donor blood transfusion.[90] To further facilitate care, the Medical Information for Clinicians section on jw.org, the Witnesses' official website, lists numerous citations from the peer-reviewed medical literature, organized by specialty, as well as ethical and legal guidance. Medical institutions and professional organizations also provide guidelines for treating Jehovah's Witness patients while respecting their religious beliefs.[91]

Subjective Well-Being and Health Habits and Possible Relationship to Religion

The relationship between the quality of physical and mental health is well documented, though further research is needed on the causes and direction of this relationship.[92] The impact of religion and spirituality (R/S) on physical and mental health has also been studied extensively. While much of current research—including JWJ-QS—cannot determine causation or directionality, the majority of existing studies have

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[86] Elin Hofverberg, "Sweden: Jehovah's Witnesses Have Right to State Funding," February 24, 2017, Library of Congress [web page], https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2017-02-24/sweden-jehovahs-witnesses-have-right-to-state-funding/; For full text of the decision in Swedish, see Supreme Administrative Court of Sweden, Case No. 2310-16, February 20, 2017, https://www.domstol.se/globalassets/filer/domstol/hogstaforvaltningsdomstolen/2017/mal-nr-2310-16.pdf.

[87] See "When Your Adolescent Questions Your Faith," *Watchtower*, February 2012, 18–21 for general principles recommended for parents in handling religious disagreement (https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/wp20120201/adolescent-questions-faith/).

[88] The establishment of HLCs is described in "Are You Ready to Face a Faith-Challenging Medical Situation?," *Our Kingdom Ministry*, November 1990, 3–6, https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/201990406; "Bridging the Gap between Doctors and Witness Patients," *Awake!*, November 22, 1990, 21–24, https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/101990845; and "Doctor-Patient Communication—A Key to Success," *Awake!*, March 8, 1991, 12–13, https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/101991163.

[89] Małgorzata Rajtar, "Health Care Reform and Diagnosis Related Groups in Germany: The Mediating Role of Hospital Liaison Committees for Jehovah's Witnesses," *Social Science & Medicine* 166, (October 2016): 57–65, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.08.016.

[90] *Hospital Liaison Committees for Jehovah's Witnesses: Assisting Patients and Physicians*, 2024, Jehovah's Witnesses—Official Website, https://www.jw.org/en/medical-library/medical-information/hospital-liaison-committees/hln/.

[91] See, for example, Oxford University Hospitals, National Health Service Foundation Trust, *Guidelines for the Medical Treatment of Jehovah's Witnesses*, Version 3.2, February 2017, https://nssg.oxford-haematology.org.uk/transfusion/files/guidelines-for-the-medical-treatment-of-jehovahs-witnesses.pdf; Royal College of Surgeons of England, *Caring for Patients Who Refuse Blood: A Guide To Good Practice for the Surgical Management of Jehovah's Witnesses and Other Patients Who Decline Transfusion*, November 2016, www.rcseng.ac.uk/library-and-publications/rcs-publications/docs/caring-for-patients-who-refuse-blood, PDF file: https://www.rcseng.ac.uk/-/media/Files/RCS/Library-and-publications/Non-journal-publications/Caring-for-patients-who-refuse-blood--a-guide-to-good-practice.pdf; American College of Surgeons, *Statement on Recommendations for Surgeons Caring for Patients Who Are Jehovah's Witnesses*, September 1, 2018, https://www.facs.org/about-acs/statements/recommendations-for-surgeons-caring-for-patients-who-are-jehovah-s-witnesses/; Bonnie L. Schuerger, "When Blood Transfusion Isn't an Option," *American Nurse Journal*, May 2, 2022, https://www.myamericannurse.com/when-blood-transfusion-isnt-an-option-jehovahs-witnesses/.

[92] Julius Ohrnberger, Eleonora Fichera, and Matt Sutton, "The Relationship between Physical and Mental Health: A Mediation Analysis," *Social Science & Medicine* 195 (December 2017): 42–49, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.11.008; Rhiannon L. White et al., "Physical Activity and Mental Health: A Systematic Review and Best-Evidence Synthesis of Mediation and Moderation Studies," *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* 21 (2024): Article 134, https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-024-01676-6.

found a positive relationship between R/S and physical and mental health.[93] A much smaller body of research questions this relationship.[94]

Despite intense scholarly interest, researchers confront numerous challenges. Religion and spirituality are complex concepts with no scholarly consensus on their definition. Broad conclusions are complicated by many additional factors, such as developmental age, culture, social environment, preexisting physical, mental, and emotional states, family background, and socio-economic status.

Harold G. Koenig, leading authority on religion and health, conducted a systematic analysis of quantitative studies on religion and spirituality and physical and mental health.[95] He isolated several features of religion that may account for positive health outcomes in the majority of studies:

1. Religion offers coping resources, such as meaning, optimism, a sense of control, and answers to existential questions, any of which may reduce the effects of stress.

2. Religious doctrines include rules and regulations for life and social relationships.

3. Most religions foster values of love, compassion, and altruism, and promote social interaction at religious events.

4. Religion promotes virtues that maintain and improve social relationships.

5. Religion encourages care of the body and discourages behaviors that are harmful to health.

Koenig's analysis cites over 600 studies he evaluated as most rigorous on R/S and health, the majority of which associate R/S with higher rates of mental and physical well-being. However, these associations do not necessarily imply causation. The observed relationships between religiosity and health outcomes are correlational and may be influenced by multiple social, psychological, or cultural factors.

The analysis covers a number of variables listed in the JWJ-QS survey instrument, inquiring of respondents' current psychological outlook and health habits. These include view of self,[96] hope,[97] overall well-being,[98] and health habits.[99]

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[93] Koenig, "Religion, Spirituality, and Health"; Harold G. Koenig, Faten Al-Zaben and Tyler J. VanderWeele, "Religion and Psychiatry: Recent Developments in Research," *BJPsych Advances* 26, no. 5 (2020): 262–72, https://doi.org/10.1192/bja.2019.81; Joanna Kruk and Basil Hassan Aboul-Enein, "Religion- and Spirituality-Based Effects on Health-Related Components with Special Reference to Physical Activity: A Systematic Review," *Religions* 15, no. 7 (2024): Article 835, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15070835; Giancarlo Lucchetti and Alessandra Lamas Granero Lucchetti, "Spirituality, Religion, and Health: Over the Last 15 Years of Field Research (1999–2013)," *International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine* 48, no. 3 (2014): 199–215, https://doi.org/10.2190/PM.48.3.e.

[94] D. G. Schlundt et al., "Religious Affiliation and Health Behaviors and Outcomes: Data from the Nashville REACH 2010 Project," *American Journal of Health Behavior* 32, no. 6 (November–December 2008): 714–24, https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4753840/.

[95] Koenig, "Religion, Spirituality, and Health."

[96] Koenig, 4; see also Małgorzata Szcześniak and Celina Timoszyk-Tomczak, "Religious Struggle and Life Satisfaction among Adult Christians: Self-Esteem as a Mediator," *Journal of Religion and Health 59* (2020): 2833–56, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-020-01082-9.

[97] Koenig, "Religion, Spirituality, and Health," 4.

[98] Koenig, 4.

[99] Koenig, 6, 8–9, 12.

The social ties available within religious communities may be related to the positive associations researchers have found between social support and healthy eating, more frequent exercise, doctor visits, better adherence to medical regimens, and overall quality of life.[100]

Little data have been gathered on aspects of physical or mental health among Jehovah's Witnesses. Two quantitative studies, in Kazakhstan and Rwanda, utilized measures similar to JWJ-QS to gather self-reported data on Jehovah's Witnesses, including measures of religiosity and inquiries about changes in outlook on life and health habits after adopting the faith. In both studies, the majority reported improvements on all measures since becoming Jehovah's Witnesses.[101]

Views about past, present, and future. Various scales measure perspectives on periods of life as an indicator of psychological well-being.[102] Zimbardo's well-known Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI) is a five-dimension framework for assessing differences in individuals' orientation toward time.[103] A five-item measure was used both in a survey of Jehovah's Witnesses in post-genocide Rwanda and in JWJ-QS to rate respondents' feelings from "very negative" to "very positive" on their childhood, recent past, present, near future, and distant future.

Among Rwandan Witnesses, negative views may reflect the traumatic effects of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi and its aftermath on those with direct and indirect experience of the event. Nevertheless, views of the future were similarly positive despite demographic differences, including age, gender, and whether respondents had experienced the Genocide against the Tutsi or not. Views of the recent past and childhood were overall lower than present or future outlook among Rwandan Witnesses, with more positive ratings among those who had belonged to the Witness faith the longest.[104]

JWJ-QS inquired of respondents' view of the future and their levels of hope. Optimism about the future and hope are closely related concepts, both of which have been shown to be linked with physical and mental health. Optimistic people are said to have "generalized favorable expectancies for their future."[105] Hope as a psychological concept is considered more "outcome-oriented" and can include the belief that one can play a part in realizing hoped-for expectations. Hence, "hope seems to be more motivational and emotional, whereas optimism is more strictly attitudinal

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[100] Renee Pieroth et al., "The Relationship between Social Support and Diet Quality in Middle-Aged and Older Adults in the United States," *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* 117, no. 8 (August 2017): 1272–78, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2017.03.018; M. R. DiMatteo, "Social Support and Patient Adherence to Medical Treatment: A Meta-Analysis," *Health Psychology* 23, no. 2 (2004): 207–218, https://doi.org/10.1037/0278-6133.23.2.207; Genevieve S. E. Smith, Wendy Moyle, and Nicola W. Burton, "The Relationship between Social Support for Physical Activity and Physical Activity across Nine Years in Adults Aged 60–65 Years at Baseline," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 20, no. 5 (March 2023): Article 4531, https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20054531; Peter Wenn et al., "Perceived Social Support and Its Effects on Treatment Compliance and Quality of Life in Cardiac Patients," *Journal of Patient Experience* (2022): Article 9, https://doi.org/10.1177/23743735221074170.

[101] Aldiyar Auyezbek and Serik Beissembayev, *Views, Values and Beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Republic of Kazakhstan: Analytical Report on the Results of the Study* (Astana, Kazakhstan, 2023): 20–22, https://paperlab.kz/research and https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pKWfXzR2nA06iOF_HXOGLIQnLY8PfDf3/view; Valens Nkurikiyinka and Jolene Chu, *Jehovah's Witnesses during and after the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda: Psychosocial Factors Related to Faith, Forgiveness, and Family* (Kigali, Rwanda: Organisation Religieuse des Témoins de Jéhovah, 2025), 345–46.

[102] Celina Timoszyk-Tomczak and Piotr Próchniak, "Construction and Validation of a New Generational Time Perspective Questionnaire," *Scientific Reports* 14, no. 1 (2024): Article 64185, https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-024-64185-3.pdf.

[103] P. G. Zimbardo and J. N. Boyd, "Putting Time in Perspective: A Valid, Reliable Individual-Differences Metric," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 77, no. 6 (1999): 1271–88, https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.77.6.1271; Chunhua Peng et al., "A Systematic Review Approach to Find Robust Items of the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory," *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021): Article 627578, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.627578.

[104] Nkurikiyinka and Chu, *Jehovah's Witnesses,* 330–34. See also Richard Benda, "Time to Hear the Other Side: Transitional Temporalities and Transgenerational Narratives in Post-Genocide Rwanda," chap. 8 in *Time and Temporality in Transitional and Post-Conflict Societies*, ed. Natascha Mueller-Hirth and Sandra Rios Oyola (New York: Routledge, 2018), 122–142.

[105] Charles S. Carver, Michael F. Scheier, and Suzanne C. Segerstrom, "Optimism," *Clinical Psychology Review* 30, no. 7 (2010): 879–89, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2010.01.006.

and expectational."[106] Both optimism and religion/spirituality are positively related to hope.[107]

A study of 142 countries concluded that optimism is a universal phenomenon that is associated with perceived health and subjective well-being.[108] Cultural differences and study design can influence age-related effects,[109] but evidence indicates a link between an optimistic orientation and the physical outcomes of longevity and healthier aging.[110]

The above study of 142 countries, based on 2005 data, ranked Japan among the least optimistic countries. More recently, an Ipsos opinion poll in 34 countries asked if respondents agreed or disagreed that 2025 would be better for them than 2024. Japan ranked last, with 38% agreeing, in contrast to 71% for the total sample.[111] A 2024 Nippon Foundation poll of 17- to 19-year-olds in six countries likewise found deep pessimism among Japanese respondents, with only 15.3% believing their country will be better economically and otherwise in the future. They also reported the lowest rates of self-esteem and self-efficacy.[112] However, as noted previously, cultural influences in Japan may contribute to more negative survey responses.[113] One study of older Japanese in Osaka observed that since the future prospects of older adults are inevitably limited, some research subjects maintained an "attitude of gratitude" by focusing on the present.[114]

Positive views of the future were noted in Jehovah's Witnesses in Kazakhstan, with 95% describing their view as either "confident" (56%) or "hopeful" (39%), whereas 3.1% chose "anxious," 0.3% chose "fearful," and 0.2% "indifferent."[115]

The Herth Hope Index (HHI), a widely used and translated tool, was originally designed to measure levels of hope in clinical settings.[116] HHI has three subscales assessing interconnectedness, positive readiness/expectancy, and temporality/future, with a maximum total score of 48. A 2007 study of the Japanese general urban population obtained a mean score of 35.5 of 48 points, with the highest scores correlated with having a spouse or other psychosocial support.[117]

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[106] Amy L. Ai et al., "Faith-Based and Secular Pathways to Hope and Optimism Subconstructs in Middle-Aged and Older Cardiac Patients," *Journal of Health Psychology* 9, no. 3 (2004): 437, https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105304042352.

[107] Harold. G. Koenig, Dana E. King, and Verna B. Carson, "Well-Being and Positive Emotions," chap. 6 in *Handbook of Religion and Health* 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 123–44.

[108] Matthew W. Gallagher, Shane J. Lopez, and Sarah D. Pressman, "Optimism Is Universal: Exploring the Presence and Benefits of Optimism in a Representative Sample of the World," *Journal of Personality* 81, no. 5 (2013): 429–40, https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12026.

[109] Kelly A. Durbin et al., "Optimism for the Future in Younger and Older Adults," *Journals of Gerontology: Series B* 74, no. 4 (2019): 565–74, https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbx171; Jin You, Helene H. L. Fung, and Derek M. Isaacowitz, "Age Differences in Dispositional Optimism: A Cross-Cultural Study," *European Journal of Ageing* 6, no. 4 (2009): 247–52, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10433-009-0130-z.

[110] Hayami K. Koga et al., "Optimism, Lifestyle, and Longevity in a Racially Diverse Cohort of Women," *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* 70, no. 10 (2022): 2793-2804, https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.17897; Lewina O. Lee et al., "Optimism, Daily Stressors, and Emotional Well-Being over Two Decades in a Cohort of Aging Men," *Journal of Gerontology: Series B* 77, no. 8 (August 2022): 1373–83, https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbac025.

[111] Marcus Lu, "Infographic: The Countries Most Optimistic about 2025," *Visual Capitalist*, December 29, 2024, https://www.visualcapitalist.com/infographic-the-countries-most-optimistic-about-2025/.

[112] "Awareness Survey of 18-Year-Olds—Country and Society," *Nippon Foundation News*, April 3, 2024, https://en.nippon-foundation.or.jp/news/articles/2024/20240403-101045.html.

[113] Miki Toyota, "Japan Ranks Last in Optimism — But Is That the Whole Story?," *Japonica Publication, Medium*, February 27, 2025, https://medium.com/japonica-publication/japan-ranks-last-in-optimism-but-is-that-the-whole-story-586556832b58.

[114] Iza Kavedzija, "An Attitude of Gratitude: Older Japanese in the Hopeful Present," *Anthropology & Aging* 41, no. 2 (2020): 59–71, https://doi.org/10.5195/aa.2020.244.

[115] Auyezbek and Beissembayev, *Views, Values and Beliefs*, 32.

[116] Kaye Herth, "Abbreviated Instrument to Measure Hope: Development and Psychometric Evaluation," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 17, no. 10 (October 1992): 1251–59, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.1992.tb01843.x; Nahid Dehghan Nayeri et al., "Construct Validity of the Herth Hope Index: A Systematic Review," *International Journal of Health Sciences* 14, no.5 (2020): 50–57, https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32952505/.

[117] Yuko Hirano et al., "The Herth Hope Index (HHI) and Related Factors in the Japanese General Urban Population," *Japanese Journal of Health and Human Ecology* 73, no. 1 (2007): 31, https://doi.org/10.3861/jshhe.73.31, PDF file: https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/jshhe1931/73/1/73_1_31/_pdf/-char/en.

Studies have shown a positive correlation between hope and religion in respondents coping with various illnesses.[118] The total sample of Jehovah's Witnesses in post-genocide Rwanda scored 41.03 of 48 points on the HHI scale, with no statistical differences based on age, gender, genocide situation, or length of time with the religious community.[119]

Life satisfaction in social research refers to an overall assessment of the quality of life, including levels of happiness, contentment, and health. Life satisfaction is often measured by a single question to rate subjective well-being. There is no scholarly consensus on a definition of well-being, which is often viewed in relation to stressful conditions. One review article suggests that "wellbeing is a state of positive feelings and meeting full potential in the world. It can be measured subjectively and objectively, using a salutogenic approach."[120]

Mental health has been defined as "a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community."[121] The ability to maintain or recover stability and well-being in the face of adversity is linked to the concept of resilience. Much resilience research aims to understand influential factors, such as age, socioeconomic status, mental and physical health, family relations, and social environment.[122]

Researchers have yet to fully understand the complex relationships of psychosocial factors that may impact life satisfaction, whether internal (e.g., mental and physical state) or external (e.g., family background, socio-economic status, culture, religion, education, trauma history).[123] The link between lack of happiness and poor life satisfaction is assumed.[124]

Despite high life expectancy and high per capita income, poor life satisfaction, along with mental health symptoms of loneliness, depression, and anxiety, "are commonly reported in the Japanese general population."[125] In Ipsos's 2024 *Global Happiness* poll, Japanese respondents ranked themselves among the lowest in life satisfaction (28th of 30), with only 57% stating that they were "very happy" or "rather happy," a 13-percent decline over 13 years.[126]

The 2025 *Ipsos Happiness Index* of 30 countries asked respondents to rate their happiness and name areas contributing to their feeling happy or unhappy. The highest rates of happiness were reported by respondents in their 60s (75%) and 70s (76%). In Japan, top factors in happiness were "my family and children" (41%) and "feeling appreciated and loved" (41%). Top reasons for unhappiness were ratings of "my financial situation" (64%) and "feeling my life has meaning" (27%). Japan's economy has been in decline since ranking as the world's second largest economy in the 2000s. This is apparently a leading reason why, when

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[118] T. Pourghaznein et al., "The Sources of Inspiration and the Level of Hope among Cancer Patients," *Iranian Journal of Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology* 8, no. 4 (2003): 82–87, http://ijpcp.iums.ac.ir/article-1-219-en.html; Abbas Shamsalinia, Tayebe Pourghaznein, and Marzie Parsa, "The Relationship between Hope and Religious Coping Among Patients with Type 2 Diabetes," *Global Journal of Health Science* 8, no. 1 (2016): 208–16, https://doi.org/10.5539/gjhs.v8n1p208.

[119] Nkurikiyinka and Chu, *Jehovah's Witnesses*, 334–36.

[120] Gemma Simons and David S Baldwin, "A Critical Review of the Definition of 'Wellbeing' for Doctors and Their Patients in a Post COVID-19 Era," *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 67, no. 8 (2021): 984–91, https://doi.org/10.1177/00207640211032259.

[121] World Health Organization, "Mental Health," October 8, 2025, under Overview, https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response.

[122] Suniya Luthar, Dante Cicchetti, and Bronwyn Becker, "The Construct of Resilience: A Critical Evaluation and Guidelines for Future Work," *Child Development* 71, no. 3 (2000): 543–62, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00164.

[123] Shota Noda, et al., "Network Structure of Common Mental Health Problems and Life Satisfaction in a Japanese Population," *Scientific Reports* 15 (2025): Article 12325, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-95554-1.

[124] Koenig, King, and Carson, *Handbook of Religion and Health*; Hongfei Ma et al., "Network Analysis of Depression and Anxiety Symptoms and Their Associations with Life Satisfaction Among Chinese Hypertensive Older Adults: A Cross-Sectional Study," *Frontiers in Public Health* 12 (2024): Article 1370359, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2024.1370359.

[125] Noda et al., "Network Structure of Common Mental Health Problems."

[126] *Global Happiness 2024*, Ipsos. One year later, the Ipsos total score for Japan rose slightly to 60% (12% "very happy," 48% "rather happy").

respondents in 30 countries rated their outlook on their present life and their expectations five years into the future, more respondents in Japan by far indicated that their present life is not good and will not get better.[127]

A pandemic and post-pandemic survey on satisfaction and quality of life was conducted from 2019 to 2024 by Japan's Director General for Economic, Fiscal and Social Structure Cabinet Office. Using 13 specific domains, the survey found that satisfaction ratings increased during the period.[128]

Measures of subjective well-being vary considerably. While individuals may self-rate their satisfaction based on their physical health or financial situation, religious individuals may tend to focus on "nonphysical characteristics, including religious or spiritual identities."[129] The framework of religious belief may supply a transcendent sense of meaning, explanations of suffering, future hope, and nonmaterial perspective on life.[130] During times of stress or crisis, religion can be a source of coping.[131] Religious communities may foster well-being by offering social support or mutual promotion of healthy behaviors.[132]

The association between life satisfaction and religion and spirituality has been explored in numerous studies, many of which have found at least a modest positive link between the two concepts.[133] Religion and spirituality are said to affect life satisfaction in two ways: direct effects from practices or beliefs that promote happiness, or indirectly by affecting other predictors of well-being, such as family satisfaction, volunteering, purpose in life, self-esteem, and social support network.[134] While establishing the actual mechanisms and causal factors in these relationships awaits further research, the evidence for generally positive associations between religion and health is abundant.[135]

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[127] *Ipsos Happiness Index 2025*, Ipsos, March 2025, 2, 18, 20, https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2025-03/Ipsos-Global-Happiness-Index-2025_1.pdf; Ei Okada, "Japan Ranks Lowest in Quality of Life Satisfaction among 30 Countries: Happiness Survey," [English version] *Mainichi*, April 10, 2025, https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20250410/p2a/00m/0na/010000c.

[128] Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, "2024 Survey Report on Satisfaction and Quality of Life (Overview) – Trends in Well-Being in Japan," August 2024, https://www5.cao.go.jp/keizai2/wellbeing/manzoku/summary24_eng.pdf; cf. Takeshi Nakagawa et al., "Stability and Change in Life Satisfaction in Japan before and during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being* 17, no. 2 (2025): Article e70021, https://doi.org/10.1111/aphw.70021.

[129] Ellen L. Idler, "Religion, Health, and Nonphysical Senses of Self," *Social Forces* 74, no. 2 (1995): 683–704, https://doi.org/10.2307/2580497.

[130] M. F. Steger, and P. Frazier, "Meaning in Life: One Link in the Chain from Religiousness to Well-Being," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 52, no. 4 (2005): 574–82, https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.52.4.574.

[131] Kenneth I. Pargament, *The Psychology of Religion and Coping: Theory, Research, Practice* (New York: Guilford Press, 1997).

[132] Harold G. Koenig, *Faith and Mental Health: Religious Resources for Healing* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2005), 56–57.

[133] Kayonda Hubert Ngamaba and Debbie Soni, "Are Happiness and Life Satisfaction Different across Religious Groups? Exploring Determinants of Happiness and Life Satisfaction," *Journal of Religion and Health* 57, no. 6 (2018): 2118–39, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-017-0481-2; Muhammad Sholihin et al., "The Effect of Religiosity on Life Satisfaction: A Meta-Analysis," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 78, no. 4 (2022), https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/article/view/7172/21747.

[134] Idler, "Religion, Health, and Nonphysical Senses of Self"; Koenig, King, and Carson, *Handbook of Religion and Health*, 127.

[135] Koenig, "Religion, Spirituality, and Health"; Elizabeth Krumrei Mancuso and Rosemond Travis Lorona, "The Scientific Study of Life Satisfaction and Religion/Spirituality," in *Handbook of Positive Psychology, Religion, and Spirituality*, ed. Edward B. Davis, Everett L. Worthington, Jr., and Sarah A. Schnitker (Switzerland: Springer, 2023), 299–313, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-10274-5_19.

Health and well-being depend on such factors as a healthy diet regimen, proactive investment in one's health, and consideration of medical treatments. These factors can impact overall psychological well-being, satisfaction in life, hope, and outlook for the future.

Attitudes about Medical Care

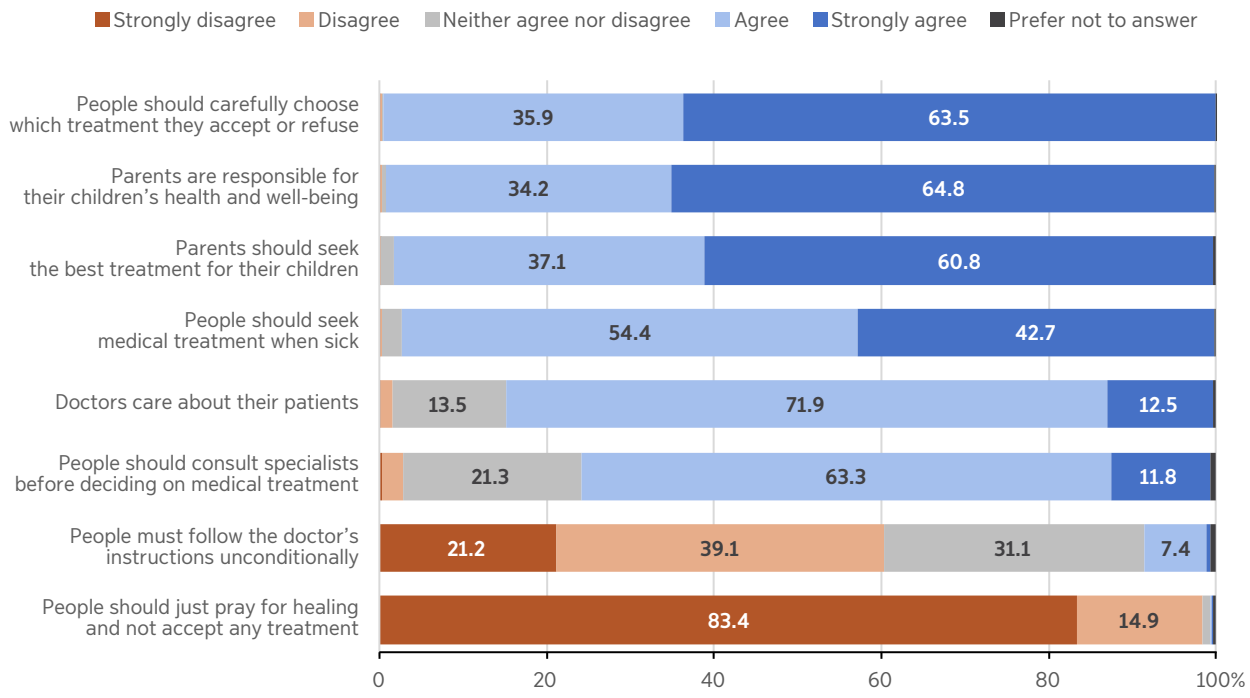
The survey asked, "Regarding medical care, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?" The respondents were given a five-point strongly disagree-strongly agree scale and a "prefer not to answer" (PNA) option to rate their views and preferences on various topics related to health care.

Figure 5.1 shows a high level of commitment to informed self-care and diligent child health management. Combining "strongly agree" and "agree" responses shows near-unanimous agreement on the following statements: "People should carefully choose which treatment they will accept and which they will refuse" (99.4%); "Parents have a responsibility to take care of their children's health and well-being" (99.0%); "Parents should seek the best treatment for their children" (97.9%); and "People should seek medical treatment when they are sick" (97.1%). A majority of respondents also agreed that "Doctors care about their patients" (84.4%) and "People should consult with different specialists before making an important decision about medical treatment" (75.1%).

> *I want to receive the best medical care available. Since life is a gift from God, I believe that medical treatment should be in harmony with His commands.*
>
> —Female, 40s

Figure 5.1. Attitudes about medical care

Regarding medical care, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Note: *n* = 7,196.

JWs believe they should seek quality medical care for themselves and their children. Most agree that doctors care about their patients.

Respondents expressed disagreement on certain health-care attitudes. For instance, combining "strongly disagree" and "disagree" responses, the near-unanimous disagreement (98.3%) with the statement "People should just pray for healing and not accept any treatment" shows that Jehovah's Witnesses do not rely on prayer as a substitute for medical care, which corresponds to their rejection of modern faith-healing practices. Also, 60.3% of respondents disagreed with the statement "People must follow the doctor's instructions unconditionally," indicating a preference for active patient involvement in health-care decisions, mirroring the trend among the general population in Japan toward favoring patient-centered care.

A notable proportion of respondents chose "neither agree nor disagree" for the statements: "Doctors care about their patients" (13.5%); "People should consult with different specialists before making an important decision about medical treatment" (21.3%); and "People must follow the doctor's instructions unconditionally" (31.1%). This neutrality may reflect cultural attitudes toward seeking multiple medical opinions[136] and deferring to doctors,[137] changing expectations about health care,[138] as well as the general tendency of Japanese survey takers to select the midpoint of response options.[139]

A subgroup analysis (see Table 5.1) conducted on the parents of the minors revealed a similar pattern to that of the total sample population in Figure 5.1.

Table 5.1. Attitudes about medical care among parents of minor children

Regarding medical care, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Attitudes about medical care	Parents of minors (*n* = 533)		
	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree
People should carefully choose which treatment they accept or refuse	0.2%	0.0%	99.6%
Parents are responsible for their children's health and well-being	0.2	0.0	99.6
Parents should seek the best treatment for their children	0.0	1.1	98.7
People should seek medical treatment when sick	0.2	2.6	97.2
Doctors care about their patients	1.5	13.3	85.2
People should consult specialists before deciding on medical treatment	3.0	20.6	75.6
People must follow the doctor's instructions unconditionally	62.3	29.8	6.9
People should just pray for healing and not accept any treatment	97.9	1.3	0.8

Note: *n* = 533. The "disagree" percentages account for "strongly disagree" and "disagree" responses. The "agree" percentages account for "strongly agree" and "agree" answers. "Prefer not to answer" (PNA) responses are not reported in tables; therefore, the sum does not add up to 100%.

[136] Okamoto et al., "Values and Risks of Second Opinion."

[137] Ishizaki et al., "Participation Preference."

[138] *Ipsos Global Trustworthiness Index 2022*, "Doctors and Scientists."

[139] Tanaka et al., "Socioeconomic Inequalities."

Health Condition and Health Habits

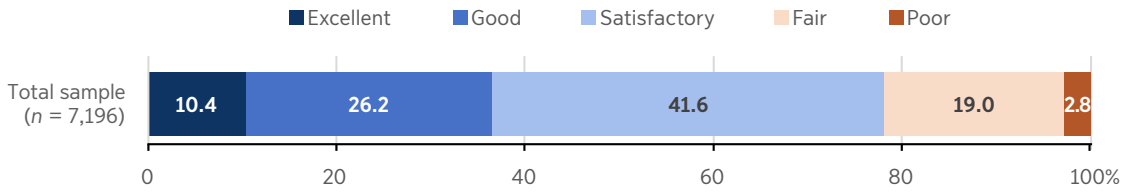
Health condition. Using a standard, single-item measure, respondents subjectively assessed their current health condition as either "excellent," "good," "satisfactory," "fair," or "poor."

As Figure 5.2 shows, 36.6% rated their health as "excellent" or "good," another 41.6% as "satisfactory," 19.0% as "fair," and only 2.8% reported "poor" health.

Subgroup analysis of health status reported as at least satisfactory (combining ratings of "satisfactory," "good," and "excellent") yielded the following results by gender: 84.0% of males and 75.8% of females. By age group, 86.4% of young adults, 80.9% of middle-aged adults, and 73.7% of older adults reported at least satisfactory health. Among JW generations, 73.6% of first-generation JWs and 84.3% of second-generation JWs rated their health status as at least satisfactory. The difference between the generations' results may be attributed to the higher mean age in the first-generation cohort (n = 3,847; mean age = 66.9 years; SD = 9.36) compared with the second generation (n = 2,799; mean age = 43.3 years; SD = 9.80).

Figure 5.2. Current health condition

How would you describe your current health condition?



Health habits. To better understand health habits among respondents, the survey inquired if they

- use hard drugs (such as heroin, cocaine, amphetamine),
- use soft drugs (hashish, marijuana, etc.),
- abuse alcohol, or
- smoke.

Respondents rated their habits on a five-point scale: "never," "rarely," "used to before but do not now," "occasionally," and "frequently," with a "prefer not to answer" option.

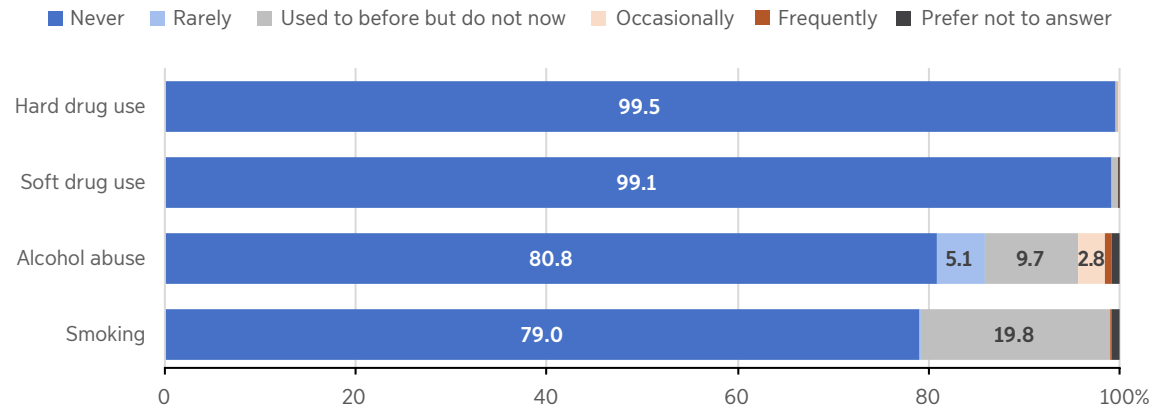
The results show (Figure 5.3) that the majority of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan have never used hard drugs (99.5%) or soft drugs (99.1%), reflecting the overall low rates of substance abuse among the general population in Japan.[140] The majority reported having never abused alcohol (80.8%) or smoked (79.0%). A small fraction (3.5%) reported abusing alcohol either occasionally (2.8%) or frequently (0.7%). Additionally, 9.7% of participants stated they used to abuse alcohol but no longer do so, and 19.8% reported a similar pattern concerning past tobacco use. These figures possibly reflect Jehovah's Witnesses avoidance of practices that are illegal or known to affect their physical and moral well-being and that conflict with their religious teachings.

Between genders, 29.3% of male participants reported a history of smoking compared with 15.9% of females. Regarding alcohol abuse, 14.0% of males reported past alcohol abuse, whereas only 7.9% of females indicated similar behavior.

> *I believe that studying the Bible has helped me stay healthy by helping me avoid things that are harmful to my body, such as smoking, drugs, and excessive drinking.*
>
> —Male, 50s

Figure 5.3. Health habits

Do you use hard or soft drugs, abuse alcohol, or smoke?



Note: *n* = 7,196.

[140] Koto et al., "Drug Use, Regulations."

To better understand the proportions of "used to before but do not now" responses on alcohol abuse and smoking, subsequent analyses were conducted to explore substance use patterns among first- and second-generation JWs. Differences in respondents' past health habits may be influenced, in part, by whether respondents were raised in JW households with early exposure to the community's values—which emphasize avoiding smoking, excessive drinking, and illicit drug use—or if they adopted the faith as adults. As Figure 5.4 illustrates, first-generation JWs reported higher rates of having smoked in the past (30.5%) and having abused alcohol in the past (14.1%) compared with second-generation JWs, who reported much lower rates of past smoking (5.6%) and past alcohol abuse (4.0%).

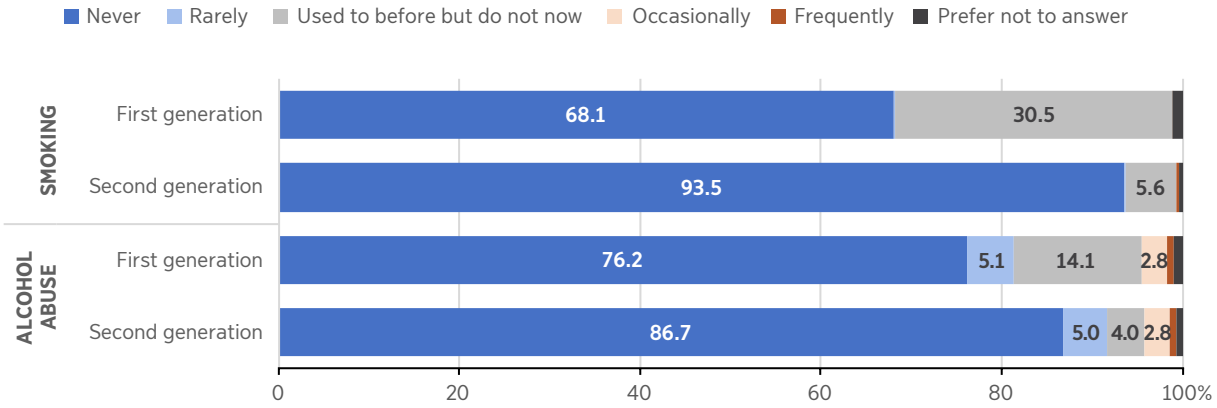
As I studied the Bible, quit smoking, and made an effort to exercise regularly, my faith grew stronger, and I felt an increasing sense of happiness.

—Female, 50s, first-generation JW

Welch's *t*-tests were conducted, accounting for the assumption of unequal variances between the groups, to compare the mean scores of smoking habit responses, with adjusted sample sizes calculated after PNAs were excluded. This revealed a significantly higher mean score for first-generation respondents (n = 3,802; M = 1.6; SD = 0.92) compared with the second-generation cohort (n = 2,785; M = 1.1; SD = 0.50), with higher means representing higher usage frequency for the first generation [$t(6,112) = 28.0$; $p < 0.001$; Cohen's d (d) = 0.64]. A similar pattern of results was observed when comparing responses of alcohol abuse mean scores, with a significantly higher mean score for the first-generation cohort (n = 3,809; M = 1.5; SD = 0.89) compared with the second generation (n = 2,778; M = 1.2; SD = 0.72), an effect underscored by the higher prevalence of previous habits of alcohol abuse among the first generation [$t(6,507) = 10.38$; $p < 0.001$; d = 0.25].

Figure 5.4. Health habits by first- and second-generation JWs

Do you smoke or abuse alcohol?



Note: First generation, n = 3,847. Second generation, n = 2,799.

More first-generation JWs reported past tobacco use and alcohol abuse than second-generation JWs.

Health habits – Diet. The survey asked, "How healthy is your diet?" Respondents rated their diet on a five-point scale, ranging from "not at all healthy" to "always healthy," with a "prefer not to answer" option.

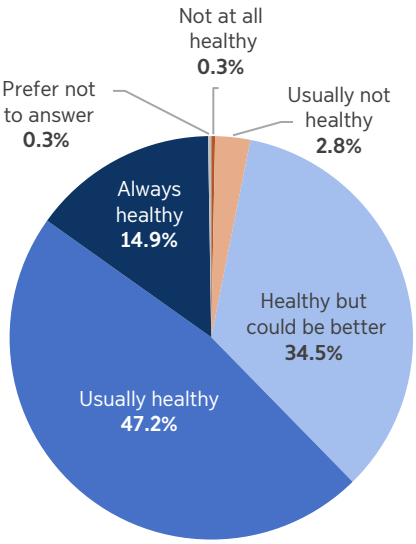
Figure 5.5 shows that 96.6% of participants reported healthy dietary habits: "always healthy" (14.9%), "usually healthy" (47.2%), and "healthy but could be better" (34.5%). A small minority, 3.1%, reported less healthy habits, with "usually not healthy" (2.8%) and "not at all healthy" (0.3%).

When combining "always healthy," "usually healthy," and "healthy but could be better" responses, subgroup analysis on genders revealed that females were slightly more likely to report healthier dietary habits (97.0%) than males (95.8%). Similarly, among age groups, older adults (97.7%) were more likely to report healthier dietary habits than middle-aged adults (96.5%) and young adults (93.4%).

> *Because of having diabetes, I pay close attention to my diet and exercise.*
>
> —Male, 80s

Figure 5.5. Health habits – Diet

How healthy is your diet?



Note: *n* = 7,196.

Health habits – Exercise. Concerning exercise habits, the survey asked, "Do you exercise?" Respondents rated the frequency of exercise with a four-point scale: "never," "rarely," "sometimes," and "regularly," with a "prefer not to answer" (PNA) option.

According to Figure 5.6, 88.2% of respondents reported participating in exercise at varying frequencies: 20.2% "regularly," 37.4% "sometimes," and 30.6% "rarely." Additionally, 11.3% indicated that they do not exercise.

The overall results among genders revealed that more males reported exercising "regularly" or "sometimes" (63.6%) than females (55.1%). However, females (13.1%) were nearly twice as likely to report never exercising than males (7.0%). Among age groups, older adults were more likely to report exercising "regularly" or "sometimes" (60.0%) compared with young adults (55.6%) and middle-aged adults (55.2%).

I've realized that as I've grown older, I've become a bit careless about my health. Even when my family invites me to exercise, I sometimes put it off because I'm busy—but that's something I want to change.

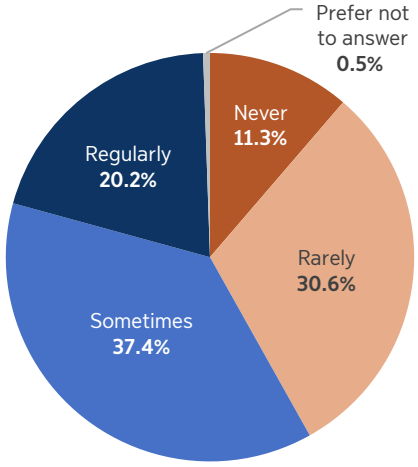
—Male, 30s

I try to maintain a healthy diet and get regular, moderate exercise.

—Male, 70s

Figure 5.6. Health habits – Exercise

Do you exercise?



Males reported exercising more frequently than females, and older adults more than younger age groups.

Note: *n* = 7,196.

Regular checkups. Regular checkups and doctor visits may indicate how invested individuals are in their health. The survey asked, "Do you have regular checkups with your doctor?" Participants reported the frequency on a four-point scale from "never" to "regularly." They could also select "prefer not to answer."

As shown in Figure 5.7, most respondents reported undergoing regular doctor checkups, with 81.4% indicating they have checkups either "regularly" (66.6%) or "sometimes" (14.8%). A smaller subset (6.4%) reported never having medical checkups, a trend particularly pronounced among young adults. Younger adults reported the highest frequency of "never" (19.1%) and "rarely" (21.3%) compared with middle-aged adults ("never," 4.8%; "rarely," 11.9%) and older adults ("never," 3.8%; "rarely," 8.7%). This age-related difference may be attributed to the younger cohort's need for fewer medical checkups than older groups, which reported higher frequencies of regular checkups (older adults, 75.1%; middle-aged adults, 65.7%; and young adults, 40.4%).

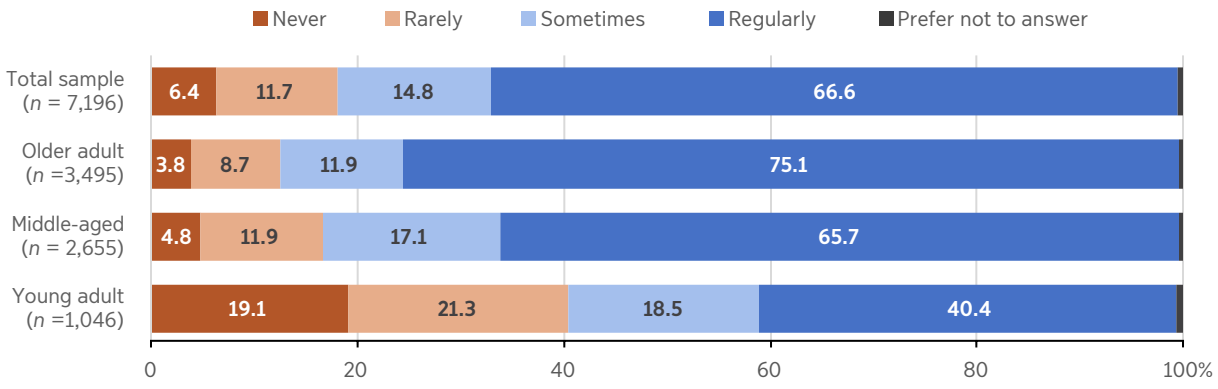
Between genders, when combining "sometimes" and "regularly" responses, 82.6% of females reported higher frequencies of doctor checkups than males (78.5%).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, I realized the importance of health and exercise, as emphasized both on general TV programs and in Jehovah's Witness publications. I exercise every day, visit my doctor regularly, and receive proper medical care. I believe this has helped me maintain a good level of physical and mental health.

—Female, 40s

Figure 5.7. Regular checkups

Do you have regular checkups with your doctor?



Over 80% reported having regular doctor checkups.

Consulting a doctor. When asked, "If you had a health problem, would you see a doctor?," respondents rated their answers on a five-point scale from "definitely not" to "definitely yes." They also could select "prefer not to answer."

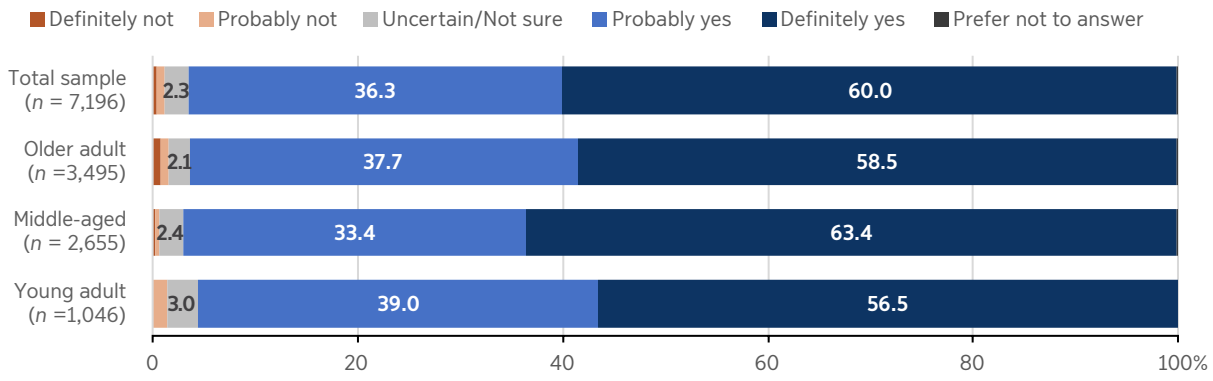
Health is very important, but I've also learned that it has its limits. I want to maintain my health in a reasonable way while following my doctor's advice.

—Male, 50s

As shown in Figure 5.8, when faced with medical problems, 96.3% of the respondents reported that they would see a doctor, with 36.3% selecting "probably yes" and 60.0% choosing "definitely yes." Only a negligible proportion, 1.2%, reported that they would probably not see a doctor, combining "probably not" (0.8%) and "definitely not" (0.4%) responses. Similar result patterns were observed when combining "probably yes" and "definitely yes" responses across age groups, with over 95% within each age group reporting that they would see a doctor. Similarly, when combining "probably yes" and "definitely yes" responses, 95.7% of males and 96.6% of females reported that they would see a doctor.

Figure 5.8. Consult a doctor for a health problem

If you had a health problem, would you see a doctor?



JWs indicate strong reliance on medical professionals, with over 96% saying they would see a doctor for a health problem.

Attitudes toward Medical Treatments

To assess the attitudes of respondents toward medical treatment, the survey asked, "If your doctor recommended the following treatments, which of them would you agree to?" The four response options were: "I would definitely not accept," "I would probably not accept," "I would probably accept," and "I would definitely accept" with the additional options of "difficult to answer" and "prefer not to answer."

Combining responses of "I would definitely accept" and "I would probably accept," results for the total sample (Figure 5.9) show that most respondents would accept the following eight medical treatments: surgical intervention (91.5%), vitamins (87.8%), physical therapy (81.8%), radiation therapy (79.9%), chemotherapy (79.5%), medications (75.8%), hemodialysis (68.0%), and antidepressants (66.9%).

> *I personally underwent major aortic surgery that was successfully completed without a blood transfusion. I am deeply grateful to the medical professionals who honored my decision. I firmly believe it is unjust to say that those who decline blood transfusions do not value life.*
>
> —Male, 40s

In contrast, when combining responses for "I would definitely not accept" and "I would probably not accept," the proportion of respondents who rejected treatments were as follows: surgical intervention (1.5%), physical therapy (2.8%), vitamins (3.6%), chemotherapy (4.3%), radiation therapy (4.8%), medications (7.6%), antidepressants (13.3%), and hemodialysis (14.3%).

Additionally, between 6.5% and 18.9% of respondents chose "difficult to answer" for different treatments: 7.8% for vitamins, 15.9% for medications, 15.5% for chemotherapy, and 18.9% for antidepressants. The variation in "difficult to answer" response rates suggests that medical treatment decisions are inherently challenging, regardless of treatment type, severity, or complexity.

> *We do not wish to receive other people's blood, but we believe that there are acceptable methods of using one's own blood, such as techniques that collect and return blood lost during surgery.*
>
> —Female, 40s

The survey revealed two treatments that most respondents would "probably not accept" or "definitely not accept." First, blood transfusions were rejected by a near-unanimous 99.2%, which would align with Jehovah's Witnesses' view on abstention from blood transfusions, based on the biblical prohibition regarding the intake of blood found in passages such as Acts 15:28–29 and Leviticus 17:10–14. Second, a substantial 73.1% of respondents would not accept organ transplants. Since Jehovah's Witnesses have no religious objection to organ transplants, negative views, especially among older respondents, may mirror ambivalence toward transplantation among the general population. By comparison, a 2019 survey in Japan, with a proportionally larger cohort of young and middle-aged adults, found that only 26% would accept a transplant, whereas 74% were either unsure (49%) or would not accept (25%).[141]

> *Last year, I was unexpectedly diagnosed with an illness and underwent treatment. . . . Even though I had made up my mind long before [to refuse a blood transfusion], when the moment actually came, the weight of my decision felt far heavier than I had imagined. It wasn't just about my own life—it was also about how my choice might affect my family.*
>
> —Male, 60s

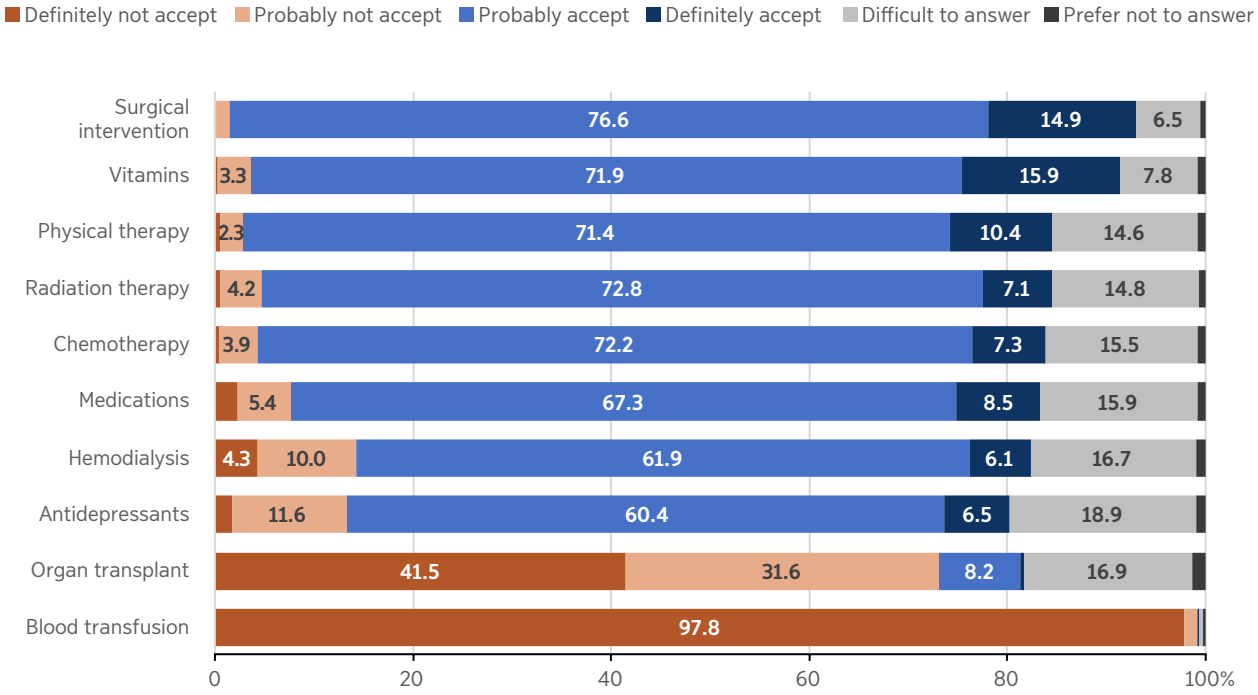
[141] Asai, Taniguchi, and Tsukata, "Individual Readiness for Transplantation Medicine."

Since I became one of Jehovah's Witnesses, I have undergone several surgical operations. Through discussions with the hospital's anesthesiology department and the surgeons, I was able to have the operations performed without any blood transfusions. The recovery has also been good.

—Female, 60s

Figure 5.9. Attitudes toward medical treatments

If your doctor recommended the following treatments, which of them would you agree to?



Note: *n* = 7,196.

Most JWs would accept common medical treatments for themselves and their children but would refuse blood transfusion.

Table 5.2 presents the preferences of respondents who are parents or guardians of minor children about medical treatment for themselves and their children. The overall results in attitudes and challenges are consistent with the findings depicted in Figure 5.9. A comparative analysis of the data indicates that parental willingness to accept or decline treatments for themselves generally corresponds to their choices for their children across various treatments. Only minor differences were observed for treatments like hemodialysis where more parents found the decision "difficult to answer" for their child (19.5%) than for themselves (14.8%). However, pronounced disparities emerged when considering decisions regarding blood transfusion and organ transplantation.

Specifically, 98.3% of parents would not accept blood transfusions for themselves, and 89.1% would refuse one for their child. The difference is driven by the 8.3% of parents who selected "difficult to answer" for their children. It is notable that half of these parents (50.0%), all female, reported being married to, separated, or divorced from a spouse who is not one of Jehovah's Witnesses. This suggests that the uncertainty may be related to the added complexity of shared decision-making with a non-JW spouse. An added challenge may occur if, in certain cases, laws concerning children's medical care take precedence over parental decisions.

Regarding organ transplants, the differences were more pronounced, with 69.2% of parents who would refuse transplants for themselves, compared with 51.4% who would decline them for their children. It is important to note that 15.8% of parents chose "difficult to answer" for themselves, while 25.0% did so for their children, suggesting parents may need to consider other factors when deciding in their children's best interests.

Table 5.2. Attitudes of parents/guardians about medical treatments for self and their minor children

Medical treatments	**For self** (parent/guardian)			**For child** (minor)		
	Not accept	Difficult to answer	Accept	Not accept	Difficult to answer	Accept
Surgical intervention	0.8%	4.7%	93.8%	1.1%	4.1%	94.0%
Vitamins	2.6	5.8	90.8	3.0	7.7	88.2
Physical therapy	4.3	11.3	83.5	3.9	11.3	83.1
Radiation therapy	5.4	10.1	83.5	4.5	12.4	82.2
Chemotherapy	4.7	10.5	83.7	3.0	9.6	86.3
Medications	7.5	13.5	78.0	7.3	13.1	78.4
Hemodialysis	13.7	14.8	70.4	11.3	19.5	67.7
Antidepressants	12.8	14.6	71.5	10.3	17.8	70.9
Organ transplant	69.2	15.8	12.9	51.4	25.0	21.8
Blood transfusion	98.3	1.1	0.0	89.1	8.3	1.1

Note: *n* = 533. The "not accept" percentages account for "I would definitely not accept" and "I would probably not accept" responses. The "accept" percentages account for "I would definitely accept" and "I would probably accept" answers. PNAs are not reported in tables; therefore, the sum does not add up to 100%.

Reasons for refusal of blood transfusion. To better understand the complex issue of refusal of blood transfusions, the survey posed the question: "Patients refuse medical treatment for different reasons. If you refused a blood transfusion, how important would the following reasons be to you?" Respondents rated the importance of various factors using a four-point scale: "very important," "important," "somewhat important," and "not important at all." Options for "do not know" and "prefer not to answer" were also provided.

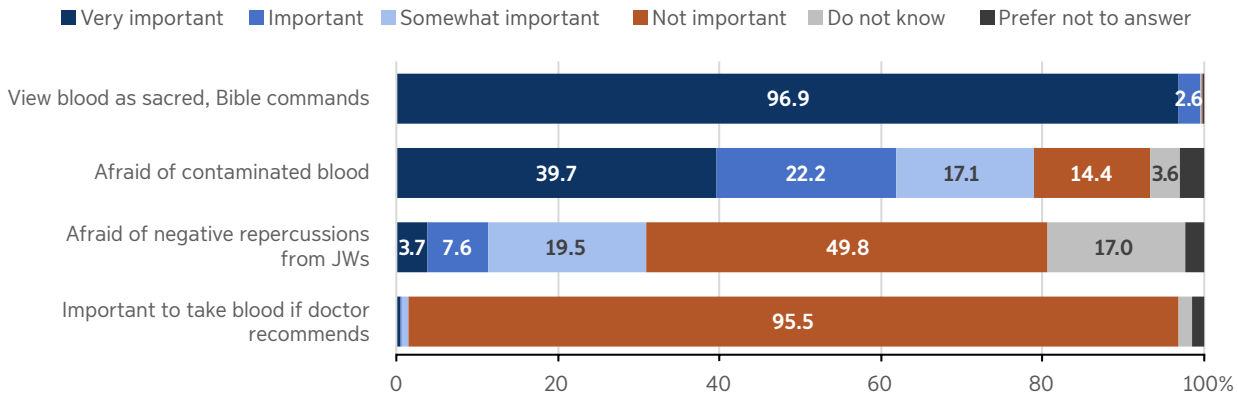
> *Since I work in a hospital, I take special care to maintain my health. However, when it comes to blood transfusions, I am determined to follow the teachings of the Bible.*
>
> —Female, 40s

The data in Figure 5.10 show that religious conviction is the overwhelming reason that Jehovah's Witnesses refuse blood transfusions. A near-unanimous 99.5% of respondents reported that their refusal is mainly based on their view of blood as sacred and their view that the Bible commands believers to "abstain from blood" (combining "very important" [96.9%] and "important" [2.6%] responses). Although Jehovah's Witnesses generally consult medical professionals (as indicated in Figures 5.7 and 5.8), 95.5% reported that they did not find it important to "take a blood transfusion if [their] doctor strongly recommends it," confirming that their motivation is primarily religious, rather than medical.

> *I was born with a congenital condition called atrial septal defect, and at the age of sixteen I underwent open-heart surgery . . . The Hospital Liaison Committee (HLC) of Jehovah's Witnesses that assisted me never told me what I must do. Because of that, I was able to make my own decision and clearly explain it to the surgeon. I am still filled with gratitude to the medical staff at that time who listened to and respected my will . . . I believe it was truly beneficial that, even at a young age, I had the opportunity to learn about the medical procedures I might undergo, make informed decisions based on my beliefs and convictions, and avoid the potential risks associated with blood transfusions, such as infections or incompatibility.*
>
> —Female, 20s

Figure 5.10. Reasons for refusal of blood transfusion

Patients refuse medical treatment for different reasons. If you refused a blood transfusion, how important would the following reasons be to you?



Note: *n* = 7,196.

The primary reason for refusal of blood is religious, followed by fear of contaminated blood. For most, fear of negative repercussions among JWs was not important.

While the primary motivation is religious, concerns about transfusion-associated complications also play a role. A total of 39.7% of Witnesses identified fear of contaminated blood as a "very important" reason for declining blood transfusions. A further 22.2% identified this as an "important" consideration, while 17.1% indicated it was only "somewhat important," and 14.4% did not view it of any importance.

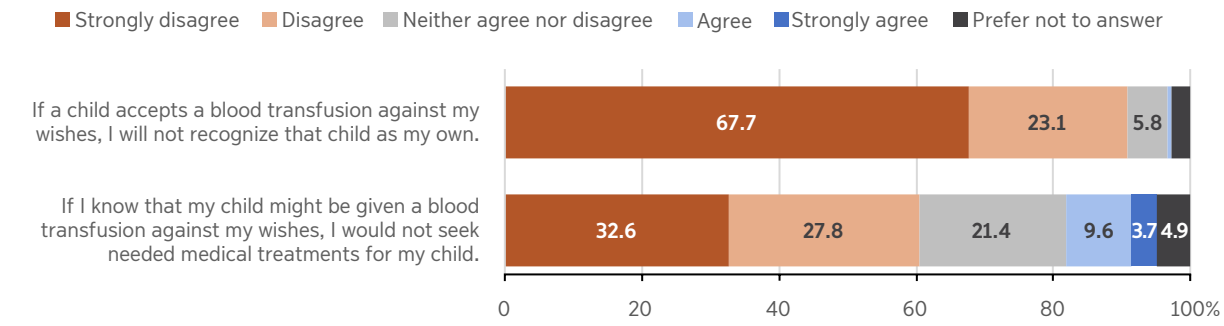
Approximately 11.3% of respondents considered "negative repercussions within the JW community" as either "very important" (3.7%) or "important" (7.6%) in their decision to refuse a blood transfusion; 19.5% considered this factor "somewhat important," while nearly half (49.8%) did not find it important. An additional 17.0% selected "do not know" about potential negative consequences within the JW community following the acceptance of a blood transfusion. Within the "do not know" subgroup (n = 1,220), 63.7% were older adults, compared with 27.3% middle-aged adults and 9.0% young adults.

Blood transfusion and minor children. The survey investigated the attitudes of parents (and guardians) of minors toward blood transfusions for their children, presenting two hypothetical situations.

As shown in Figure 5.11, respondents with minor children were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement: "If a child accepts a blood transfusion against my wishes, I will not recognize that child as my own." The majority of parents (90.8%) disagreed when combining responses of "strongly disagree" (67.7%) and "disagree" (23.1%). In other words, most parents stated that they would continue to recognize their child as their own, even if the child accepted and received a blood transfusion contrary to their parents' wishes—a scenario that may occur in countries where legislation may recognize an older minor as sufficiently mature to make such decisions independently. A small percentage (5.8%) selected "neither agree nor disagree." Only three parents (0.6%) agreed with the statement, while no parent chose "strongly agree." Another 2.8% preferred not to answer.

> *When it comes to blood transfusions, I believe that each individual has the right to decide what kind of treatment they will accept and that parents should not impose their faith on their children. This is also what the Bible teaches us.*
>
> —Male, 40s, with children

Figure 5.11. Scenario of blood transfusions for children



Note: n = 533.

In the second scenario, parents were presented with the statement: "If I know that my child might be given a blood transfusion against my wishes, I would not seek needed medical treatments for my child." The majority response reaffirmed the high level of parental responsibility observed elsewhere in the survey (Tables 5.1 and 5.2). Overall, 60.4% of parents disagreed with the statement that they would not seek necessary medical treatments for their child, with 32.6% responding "strongly disagree" and 27.8% responding "disagree." In other words, the majority of parents would still pursue medical treatments for their children even if it might result in a blood transfusion against their wishes. Another 21.4% of parents selected "neither agree nor disagree," and of these, 38.6%—mostly women—were married to, separated from, or divorced from a non-Jehovah's Witness spouse, potentially adding uncertainty due to collaborative decision-making with a spouse of a different faith.

When presented with this scenario, 13.3% of parents agreed they "would not seek needed medical treatments," with 3.7% responding "strongly agree" and 9.6% responding "agree." Given the near-unanimous consensus that parents of minors are responsible for their children's health and should pursue the best possible treatment for them (see Table 5.1), the response of this group may be reflective of the complex and hypothetical nature of the scenario. An additional 4.9% chose not to answer the question.

Psychosocial Measures of Well-Being

This last section covers question sets that measure respondents' subjective feelings about their psychological well-being and outlook for the future.

Perceived changes in psychological outlook and health habits. The survey asked respondents to rate their current psychological outlook and habits compared with the time before becoming Jehovah's Witnesses using a six-point scale: "much worse," "slightly worse," "same as before – not good," "same as before – good," "slightly better," and "much better." Additional options included "does not apply" (DNA) and "prefer not to answer" (PNA). The measure did not draw inferences or suggest causation but did identify from a temporal standpoint how respondents perceived any changes in how they viewed themselves since becoming Jehovah's Witnesses.

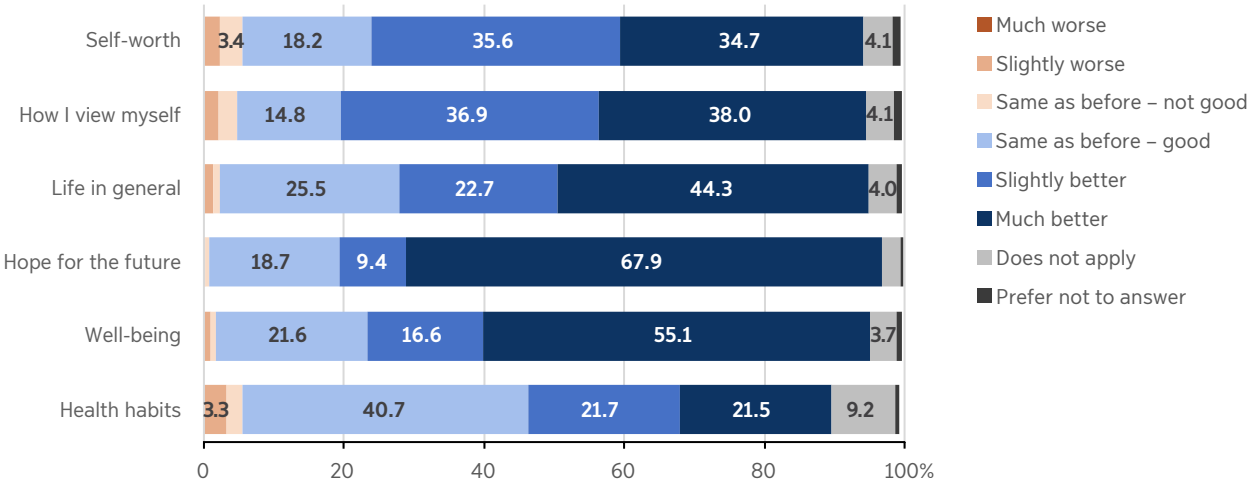
> *I have always tended to lack self-confidence, but since I began applying Bible principles more seriously in my life, I've been able to maintain my self-respect.*
>
> —Male, 40s

As shown in Figure 5.12, combining "slightly better" and "much better" responses, most respondents indicated that their psychological outlook and health habits had improved since becoming Jehovah's Witnesses. Specifically, 77.3% reported positive changes in their outlook toward the future, 74.9% experienced improved sense of self, 71.7% noted enhanced well-being, 70.3% felt a stronger sense of self-worth, 67.0% reported improvement in life in general, and 43.2% adopted healthier habits. Additionally, another sizeable portion (ranging from 14.8% to 40.7% depending on the item) reported no change with "same as before – good" compared with the time before becoming Jehovah's Witnesses.

> *I was so busy with caregiving that I put my own needs aside for a long time. But what I experienced and learned during that period has helped me understand the happiness that comes from loving myself in a balanced way.*
>
> —Female, 50s

Figure 5.12. Perceived changes in psychological outlook and health habits

In your opinion, compared to the time before you became one of Jehovah's Witnesses, how would you rate your current habits described in the following items?



Note: *n* = 7,196.

Self-reported improvements were higher particularly among first-generation JWs, who reported greater change across all habits after adopting the faith compared with those reared in the faith, as shown in Table 5.3.

Since I became one of Jehovah's Witnesses, the quality of my life has greatly improved, including the way I cope with mental illness.

—Female, 50s

Table 5.3. Perceived changes in psychological outlook and health habits by JW generation

Psychological outlook – Health habits	First-generation JWs (*n* = 3,847)			Second-generation JWs (*n* = 2,799)		
	Same – good	Slightly better	Much better	Same – good	Slightly better	Much better
Self-worth	16.0%	36.6%	37.8%	21.8%	34.3%	29.9%
How I view myself	11.2	38.9	41.6	19.8	34.6	32.7
Life in general	20.8	23.5	49.1	32.1	21.5	37.3
Hope for the future	13.4	9.2	74.8	26.3	10.3	57.3
Well-being	15.9	17.1	62.1	29.5	16.4	44.9
Health habits	32.0	25.1	27.0	52.2	17.0	14.0

Note: The table summarizes only "same as before – good," "slightly better," and "much better" responses; therefore, the sum does not reach 100%.

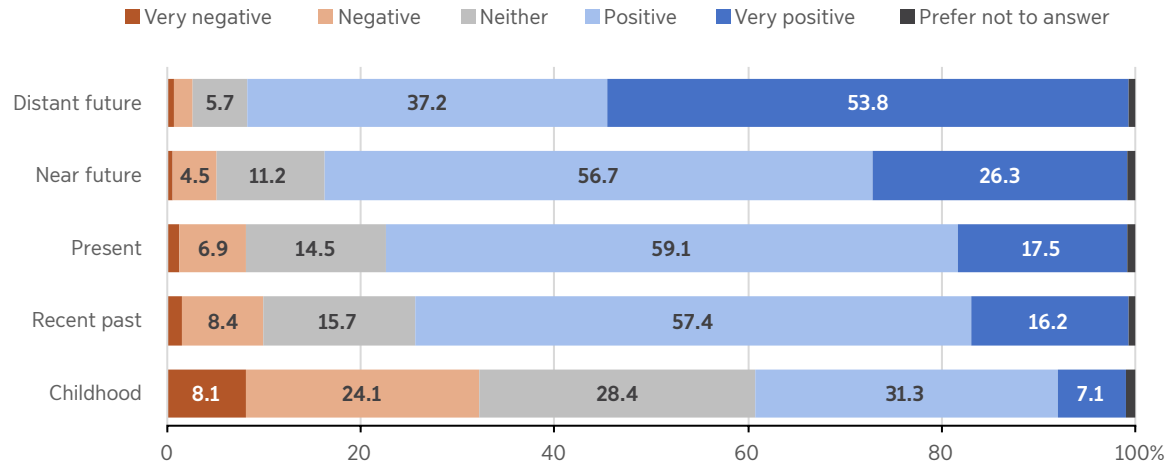
Temporal view of periods in life. The survey assessed how respondents felt about different periods in their life: childhood, the recent past, the present, the near future, and the distant future. The five-point scale ranged from "very negative" to "very positive," with a PNA option.

Across different periods of life, most respondents, as shown in Figure 5.13, reported feeling positive (either "very positive" or "positive"), especially about the distant future (91.0%) and near future (83.0%), followed by the present (76.6%) and the recent past (73.6%). Responses about childhood were more varied, with 38.4% rating it positively, 32.2% negatively, and 28.4% neither.

> *Having a hope for the future greatly contributes to my mental and emotional well-being.*
>
> —Female, 40s

Figure 5.13. Temporal view of time periods in life

How do you feel about the following time periods in your life?



Note: *n* = 7,196.

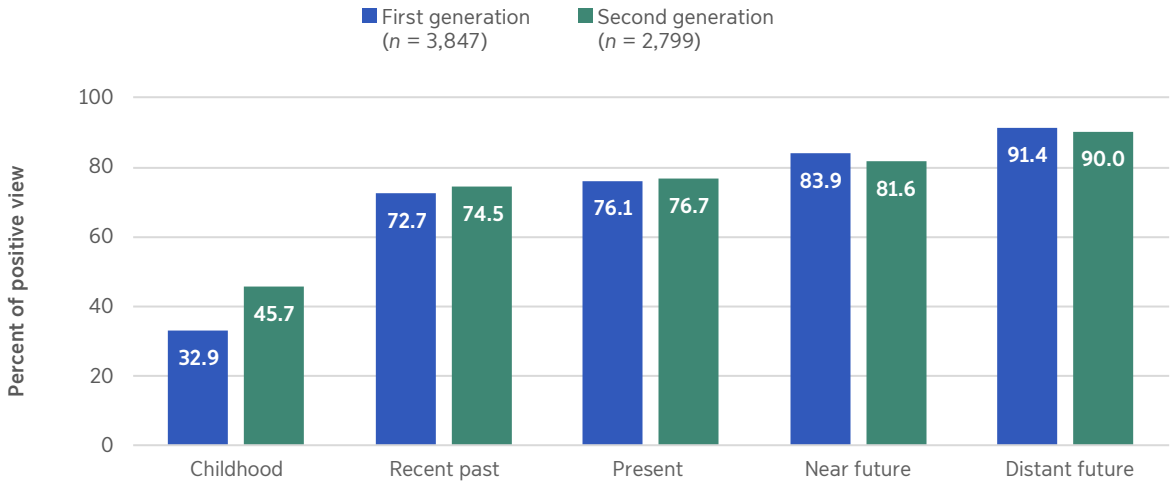
Among subgroups, the following differences were observed: Females were more likely to report negative feelings regarding childhood experiences (34.8%) compared with males (26.0%). In terms of age groups, older adults were more likely to respond "neither" (31.9%) when indicating how they felt about their childhood experience compared with middle-aged adults (25.7%) and younger adults (23.8%).

> *I had low self-esteem, probably because my mother was a widow who was always busy working and raising children; so my childhood was rather lonely. But after I started studying the Bible, I was able to gain wisdom and began to lead a happier, more fulfilling life.*
>
> —Female, 50s

The results pattern was replicated between first- and second-generation JWs, as reported in Figure 5.14, with childhood being reported more positively among the second-generation cohort (45.7%) than the first generation (32.9%). A Welch's *t*-test comparing the mean scores (excluding PNAs) between first-generation JWs (n = 3,806; M = 2.9; SD = 1.05) and second-generation JWs (n = 2,784; M = 3.2; SD = 1.10) revealed a significantly higher mean score for second-generation JWs, corresponding to a more positive feeling of childhood experience [$t(5,830) = -10.9$; $p < 0.001$; $d = 0.27$].

Figure 5.14. Temporal view of time periods in life by JW generation

How do you feel about the following time periods in your life?



Note: Figure visualizes combined "very positive" and "positive" responses.

While first- and second-generation JWs rated most periods of life similarly, those raised by JW parents viewed their childhood more positively.

View of the future. To further understand Jehovah's Witnesses' view of the future, the survey asked "When you think about tomorrow and your future, how do you feel?" Respondents were given options to choose terms that best described their feelings. The list comprised "confident," "hopeful," "indifferent," "anxious," "fearful," and a "hard to answer" option.

The top two responses for the total sample population, as shown in Figure 5.15, were "confident" (45.3%) and "hopeful" (28.9%). A small proportion (12.2%) reported feeling "anxious," and another 10.4% found it "hard to answer." A negligible fraction of respondents selected feeling "indifferent" (2.6%) and "fearful" (0.5%).

I've learned that the secret to contentment and happiness is to focus on what we can still do rather than on what we can no longer do.

—Male, 30s, second-generation JW

For me, the hope found in the Bible has been a tremendous source of strength in helping me endure the challenges of the present.

—Male, 30s, second-generation JW

A similar pattern of top two choices was observed for the JW generations. In detail, 44.0% of the first generation reported feeling "confident" compared with 46.9% for the second generation, while 32.1% of first-generation Jehovah's Witnesses reported feeling "hopeful" compared with 24.5% for the second generation.

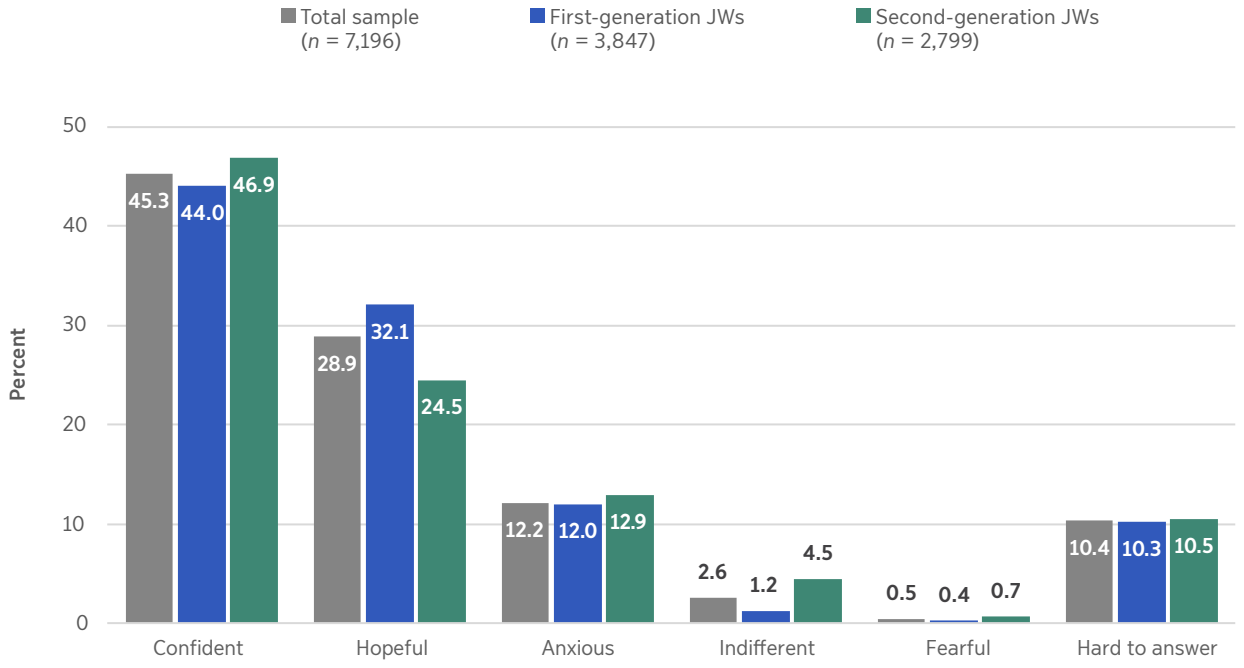
Analysis by gender showed that 48.0% of females reported feeling "confident" about the future, while 38.8% of males expressed this sentiment. In contrast, 34.2% of males chose "hopeful" compared with 26.8% for females.

I often felt a vague sense of anxiety about the future. When I later developed a mental illness, life felt as though I were walking a tightrope each day. Yet through studying the Bible and coming to know Jehovah, I found a deep sense of stability and peace and gained genuine confidence in the hope it provides for the future.

—Male, 30s

Figure 5.15. View of future of total sample and JW generations

When you think about tomorrow and your future, how do you feel?



"Hopeful" and "confident" were the top words selected to describe views of the future. Smaller proportions reported feeling "anxious," "indifferent," or "fearful."

Among age groups, 48.0% of middle-aged adults were "confident" about the future compared with 44.9% for older adults and 40.0% for young adults. In contrast, 32.5% of older adults felt "hopeful" compared with 26.1% for young adults and 25.3% for middle-aged adults. With depression rates on the rise in Japan among older adults 60 years and over who live alone,[142] this section assessed this same group's (n = 443) view of the future. While reported confidence was close to the total sample (43.1%), these respondents reported a more hopeful (34.5%) and less anxious (11.5%) view of the future.

Hope. The Herth Hope Index (HHI)[143] enabled the assessment of hope among Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan. The measure presented 12 items, each rated on a four-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" and a PNA option. HHI comprises three subscales of four items each: Interconnectedness, Readiness/Expectancy, and Temporality/Future. The higher the score, the higher the level of hope, with a maximum score of 16 for each subscale and a maximum total score of 48.

As shown in Table 5.4, the overall total score after excluding PNA responses was 39.5 out of 48 (SD = 4.63), indicating a hopeful outlook among respondents. All subscale mean scores (Interconnectedness, Readiness/Expectancy, and Temporality/Future) were at least 13 out of 16.

Table 5.4. Summary results of hope index

Hope index score	*M*	*SD*
Total Score (Range 12 to 48)	39.5	4.63
Interconnectedness (Range 4 to 16)	13.1	1.65
Readiness/Expectancy (Range 4 to 16)	13.4	1.74
Temporality/Future (Range 4 to 16)	13.0	1.73

Note: n = 6,226. Respondents who answered PNA for any item were excluded from the analysis.

Most JWs do not feel alone or scared about the future.

Combining "strongly agree" and "agree" responses, most respondents agreed with the following statements: "I have a faith that gives me comfort" (97.5%), "I am able to give and receive caring/love" (96.9%), and "I can recall happy/joyful times" (95.4%). Conversely, most disagreed or strongly disagreed that they felt all alone (79.0%) or scared about their future (84.3%).

I believe it's thanks to my Bible study that I can keep from falling into despair when things are difficult.

—Female, 40s

I'm currently battling an illness, but I'm content with my own situation because I have other sources of happiness besides my health.

—Female, 50s

[142] Erica Kobayashi et al., "Living Alone and Depressive Symptoms among Older Japanese: Do Urbanization and Time Period Matter?," *Journals of Gerontology, Series B, Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences* 78, no. 4 (2023): 718–29, https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbac195.

[143] Herth, "Abbreviated Instrument to Measure Hope."

Subgroup analysis on gender and age groups revealed similar results between males (n = 1,861; M = 39.6; SD = 4.86) and females (n = 4,365; M = 39.5; SD = 4.52), as well as among different age groups (young adults: n = 938, M = 39.5, SD = 5.23; middle-aged adults: n = 2,320, M = 39.9, SD = 4.94; older adults: n = 2,968, M = 39.2, SD = 4.12; and older adults 60 years and over who live alone: n = 355; M = 39.3; SD = 4.26).

Similar ratings were reported for both first-generation (n = 3,276; M = 39.1; SD = 4.22) and second-generation (n = 2,482; M = 40.0; SD = 5.07) JWs, as well as for those who had stopped being JWs for a period (n = 225; M = 39.2; SD = 5.16).

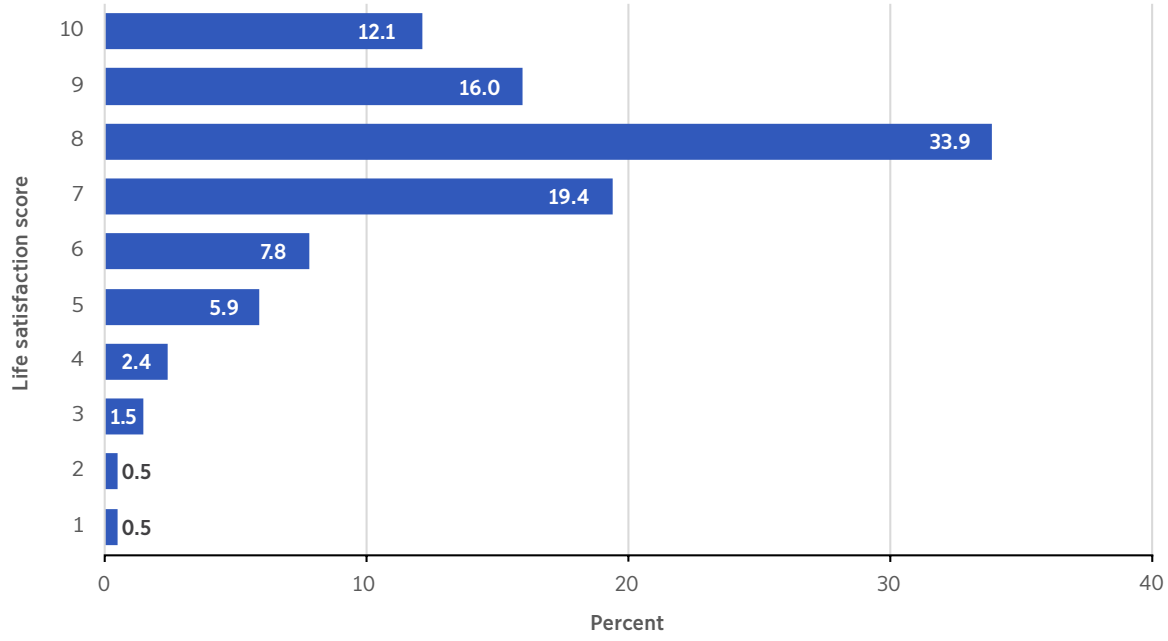
Life satisfaction. When asked to rate their life satisfaction on a scale from 1 (not satisfied) to 10 (satisfied), most respondents (81.4%) reported a high level of satisfaction, with ratings of at least 7 out of 10. The mean score was 7.6 (SD = 1.66) with a median of 8.0, placing the JW sample population in the upper third of the satisfaction scale, as depicted in Figure 5.16.

My life isn't perfect, but each day feels fulfilling and satisfying.

—Male, 40s

Figure 5.16. Life satisfaction

All things considered, rate on the scale from 1 (not satisfied) to 10 (satisfied), how satisfied are you with your life in general these days?



Note: n = 7,196.

On a scale of 1 to 10, JWs rated their life satisfaction at about 8.

Gender analysis indicated a similar level of satisfaction between males (n = 2,085; M = 7.7; SD = 1.67) and females (n = 5,111; M = 7.6; SD = 1.65).

As shown in Table 5.5, a fine-grained analysis across nine age groups, each spanning 10-year intervals from 18 to 98 years and older, revealed a higher life satisfaction mean starting at age 78 (M = 8.0; SD = 1.47).

As for older adults aged 60 and over who live alone, they reported results (n = 443; M = 7.7; SD = 1.51) comparable to the total sample mean of 7.6.

Since I became one of Jehovah's Witnesses, I've learned to view things from a long-term perspective. For example, having a clear hope for the future helps me handle difficult situations with a positive attitude.

—Female, 70s

Table 5.5. Life satisfaction by current age group

All things considered, rate on the scale from 1 (not satisfied) to 10 (satisfied), how satisfied are you with your life in general these days?

Age groups	*n*	*M*	*SD*
18–27	215	7.7	1.72
28–37	600	7.6	1.83
38–47	1,357	7.7	1.77
48–57	1,299	7.6	1.75
58–67	1,495	7.5	1.62
68–77	1,910	7.7	1.48
78–87	304	8.0	1.47
88–97	12	8.3	1.07
98+	4	8.5	1.00

Respondents aged 78 and older had the highest life satisfaction.

Note: n = 7,196.

Life satisfaction scores were similar for first-generation (n = 3,847; M = 7.6; SD = 1.58) and second-generation Jehovah's Witnesses (n = 2,799; M = 7.7; SD = 1.76). Similar life satisfaction scores were also observed among those who had stopped being Jehovah's Witnesses for a time (n = 268; M = 7.5; SD = 1.75), with results comparable to the total sample mean of 7.6.

Group differences in life satisfaction were found based on marital status. Similar to the findings on family satisfaction in Section 3, those married (n = 4,511; M = 7.8; SD = 1.57) or widowed (n = 490; M = 7.8; SD = 1.48) reported the highest level of life satisfaction, followed by the no-longer-married cohort, which combines both the divorced and the separated respondents, (n = 368; M = 7.4; SD = 1.75) and then those never married (n = 1,827; M = 7.3; SD = 1.84).

An upward pattern was observed, as shown in Figure 5.17, considering the length of time respondents had been part of the Jehovah's Witness community. The longer respondents had been baptized Witnesses, the greater life satisfaction they reported.

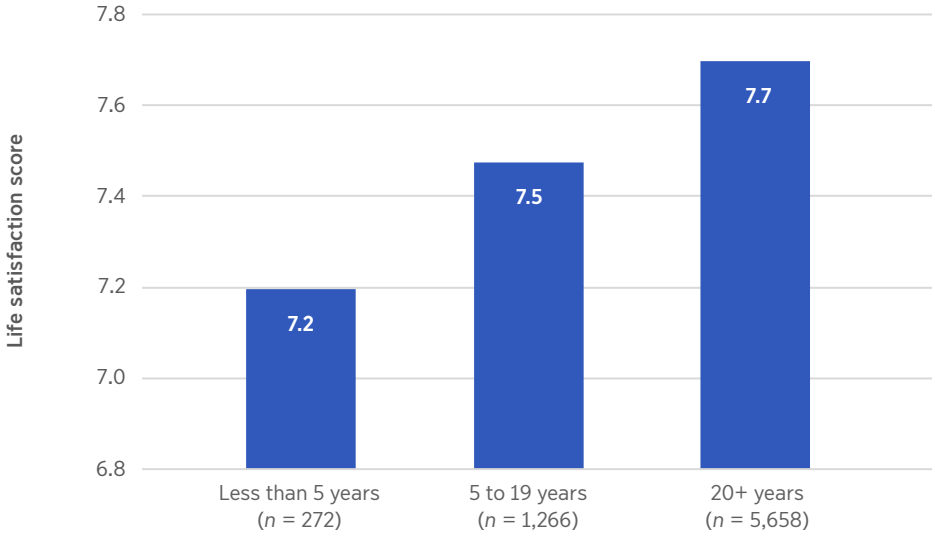
A one-way ANOVA was conducted to test for differences on the mean of life satisfaction scores across three groups defined by the number of years spent in the religion [$F(2, 7193) = 19.77$; $p < 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.005$]. A series of post-hoc Welch's t-tests conducted on the life satisfaction scores between the groups showed that the mean score was statistically significantly higher for those who have been in the faith for 5 to 19 years ($n = 1{,}266$; $M = 7.5$; $SD = 1.82$) compared with those in the faith for less than 5 years ($n = 272$; $M = 7.2$; $SD = 1.79$), with higher scores reflecting a higher life satisfaction [$t(400) = 2.32$; $p = 0.021$; $d = 0.15$]. Similar significant results were noted among those with 20 years or more as Jehovah's Witnesses ($n = 5{,}658$; $M = 7.7$; $SD = 1.60$), as compared with those having 5 to 19 years [$t(1{,}733) = 4.05$; $p < 0.001$; $d = 0.14$] and those having less than 5 years in the faith [$t(292) = 4.54$; $p < 0.001$; $d = 0.31$].

I am happy now, and I don't want to go back to the time when I didn't know the Bible.

—Female, 40s

Figure 5.17. Life satisfaction by years as JWs

All things considered, rate on the scale from 1 (not satisfied) to 10 (satisfied), how satisfied are you with your life in general these days?



Highest life satisfaction was reported among those who had been JWs for 20 years or more.

Note: $n = 7{,}196$.

Conclusion

The survey results provide insights into the health-related perceptions, habits, and viewpoints among Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan, highlighting that physical and psychological well-being are priorities among the study population.

Several measures revealed an overall positive psychological outlook among Jehovah's Witnesses, with the majority endorsing statements reflecting positive and optimistic attitudes. Most respondents agreed with statements indicating they have a faith that gives them comfort (97.5%), the ability to both give and receive love (96.9%), and recollections of happy times (95.4%). In contrast, most respondents disagreed with statements suggesting

that they feel lonely (79.0%) or scared about the future (84.3%). These results were supported by the Herth Hope Index, which yielded an overall score of 39.5 out of 48, indicating an elevated level of hope.

The majority (78.2%) of respondents assessed their health as satisfactory or better. The data also revealed that attention is paid to personal health care, with 96.3% expressing willingness to consult a physician if a health issue arises and 81.4% regularly attending medical checkups. Healthy lifestyle practices were evident, as most respondents reported refraining from substance abuse. Specifically, the majority of Jehovah's Witnesses stated that they never used hard drugs (99.5%) or soft drugs (99.1%), nor did they ever abuse alcohol (80.8%) or use tobacco (79.0%). These findings were particularly prominent among second-generation Jehovah's Witnesses, indicating possible effective, intergenerational transmission of health-oriented behaviors and values within the faith community. Self-reported enhancements in health behaviors, optimism regarding the future, overall well-being, and self-esteem, particularly among first-generation Jehovah's Witnesses, were also reported. This group indicated more substantial positive changes following their adoption of the faith compared with individuals reared in the faith. These findings, together with religious commitment and perceptions of social support within congregations (Figure 2.13), coincide with existing research on the effects of religion and health-related outcomes.

Parental attitudes toward medical treatments for their children reflected an effort to consider both medical needs and religious beliefs. Most parents expressed willingness to treat their children with medications, vitamins, physical therapy, surgeries, or chemotherapy.

Due to Jehovah's Witnesses' biblical beliefs involving abstention from blood, parents reported that they would not accept blood transfusions for themselves (98.3%) or for their children (89.1%). Despite this, 60.4% of parents stated that they would continue to pursue necessary medical treatments for their children even if these might involve a blood transfusion against their wishes. Various factors may have contributed to the 21.4% of parents' neutral position including—but not limited to—inherent challenges related to medical treatment decisions, institutional regulations that supersede parental authority in decisions concerning childcare, and consideration of the non-JW spouse's perspective, which may differ from that of the JW parent.

While the vast majority of respondents indicated that their religious conviction was the main rationale for their rejection of blood transfusions, some indicated that concern about the possibility of receiving contaminated blood was a secondary important factor.

In summary, Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan take a holistic and proactive approach to health and well-being. This is characterized by high rates of consultation with medical professionals and an optimistic psychological profile. The single significant exception to this medical acceptance—the refusal of blood transfusions—is driven by deeply held religious conviction. However, the willingness of most parents to continue pursuing all other necessary medical care for their children underscores a deep commitment to both their faith and their parental duty. They also reported an optimistic outlook regarding the future, as well as higher life satisfaction associated with the length of time spent in the religion.

JWJ-QS survey findings related to the mental and physical health and well-being of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan contribute to the growing body of research exploring the relationship between religion and health. While causation cannot be inferred from these cross-sectional findings, the results suggest that individuals with stronger religious orientation may be more likely to engage in health-promoting behaviors. These findings support existing evidence that religious engagement is associated with greater well-being.

Conclusion

The quantitative study of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan (JWJ-QS) aimed to fill a gap in scientific literature about the religious community in Japan, composed of over 200,000 adherents. Recent public discourse highlighted this research gap. The study team was advised by an academic committee and investigated religious factors, family life, general social attitudes, and health and well-being. The online, anonymous survey gathered the views of nearly 7,200 Jehovah's Witnesses (JWs) from across Japan.

Study Background

The wide-ranging survey inquired about experiences of belonging to the Jehovah's Witness (JW) community, first-generation conversion and intergenerational transmission of the faith, views of JW teachings and practices, parenting approaches, family relations, and attitudes toward personal priorities, moral values, interpersonal relationships, medical treatments, and societal responsibilities. Two investigators, a statistician and an academic in information science, conducted the study independently of the religious organization. An independent advisory committee of non-JW scholars conducted peer reviews at key stages of the study. The advisors are experienced scholars internationally recognized for their decades of research about minority religions in various countries.

The study was designed to maximize high-quality data collection and minimize bias. The investigators, both affiliated with the JW community, brought in-depth knowledge of its beliefs and practices to the study's design while, at the same time, adhering to established research practices to minimize potential biases.

The survey instrument consisted of a combination of validated measures and customized questions tailored to reflect multiple perspectives about the beliefs and practices of Jehovah's Witnesses. Also, using a random cluster sampling method, one of the academic advisors selected 150 congregations from all prefectures.[144] All submissions were sent directly to and saved in the survey platform, which was exclusively accessible to the research team. A social desirability question set was used to filter out respondents who could be judged as aiming to please with their responses. Established data-cleaning procedures and statistical methods were used to process and analyze the final dataset of 7,196 respondents.

As a cross-sectional study, which constitutes a snapshot in time, the findings mainly consist of comparative, not causal, conclusions. The study did not include a non-JW control group. However, subgroup comparisons were conducted, particularly to examine differences between converts (first generation) and those who were raised in Jehovah's Witness households (second generation). Because the sample did not include JW minors under 18 years of age, the survey asked respondents, including second-generation adults, to reflect retrospectively on their childhood experiences.

Despite the inevitable limitations of this type of quantitative research (which are discussed in some detail below), the results of the survey with a large dataset drawn from randomly selected congregations provide unique insights into the subjective assessment of the experiences, beliefs, and attitudes of Jehovah's Witnesses. The following sections summarize the study's principal findings by major topic areas, followed by a brief integrative discussion across themes.

[144] Because no national registry exists, random cluster sampling was employed.

Demographic Portrait

Geographically, the study population represented all regions and prefectures of Japan with a general pattern aligning with Japan's population, though minor differences in some instances were observed. As for age and gender, the JW sample was disproportionately composed of older adults and women, which may be more typical of religious populations. Among JW respondents, 95.1% reported having education beyond minimum requirements, with 58.4% completion rates for high school and about one-fourth for junior college or vocational programs. A smaller proportion of respondents have college, university, or graduate degrees; and a markedly lower percentage of respondents reported having compulsory elementary education or junior high school only.

The employment rate of the sample was broadly in line with national levels and reflected a wide variety of occupations. On material well-being, most respondents reported little or no financial strain, with 84.2% indicating no difficulty purchasing essentials and 2.4% reporting difficulty affording food. Single parents and older females, usually considered economically vulnerable groups, reported substantially lower economic difficulty than comparable groups in the general population in Japan.

In short, the community reflected in the data is demographically diverse across age, gender, education, and economic status—context that should inform the interpretation of the study's findings as a whole.

Religious Experiences

Becoming Jehovah's Witnesses. Becoming part of the JW community involves a period of Bible study, expressed commitment to religious values, and baptism. Based on dates of baptism, annual growth patterns in the total sample were comparable to the organization's annual reports. Age at baptism ranged widely for both first- and second-generation Witnesses. Almost half of all respondents spent two or more years in prior study before they were baptized, and about one-third of the total sample were raised by at least one JW parent, indicating the lengthy process involved in becoming Jehovah's Witnesses.

Almost all (96.7%) reported that becoming Jehovah's Witnesses was their personal decision, most (86.5%) reporting no external pressure or control and many (79.1%) recalling that they could ask questions and express doubts. Responses were similar between first-generation and second-generation JWs. Respondents highly ranked social (including family) connections and logical teachings as key initial attractions to the faith, which corresponded to the time investment many made in getting to know JWs and their teachings before deciding to be baptized. However, these early social and cognitive motivations for becoming JWs have changed over time for many who chose to remain in the faith.

These processes—including personal decision-making, long periods of study, and cognitive engagement—also shape how JW families pass on their beliefs across generations.

Remaining, Regrets, and Returning. The survey depicts a community that is broadly satisfied in its religious commitment. Respondents cited spiritual, cognitive, and moral formation, and future-oriented motivations as reasons for remaining JWs, rather than social pressure. The most frequently selected reasons to remain were "to be closer to God," the "logic of the teachings," and "hope for the future," whereas fewer than 1% cited fear of rejection by JW family members as a reason to stay. Consistent with this profile, 96.1% said they "never" or "rarely" regretted being JWs.

A small subset of the sample (3.7%) reported having spent a period away from the community; among those, almost half (48.9%) had resumed their association within four years. Generational differences were notable, with 38.1% of first-generation respondents returning within four years (average age of 47.3), as compared with 55.3% of the second generation (average age of 30.8). When asked why they returned, respondents indicated their wish to have a closer relationship with God (90.3%) and to make better choices in life

(89.5%); while social reasons (e.g., missing association with JW friends and family, 37.7% and 29.9%, respectively) were selected less frequently. Selections were similar for first- and second-generation JWs. Taken together, these findings indicate commitment to and satisfaction with their religious choices, a pattern of decisions grounded in personal conviction rather than coercion, and motivations to return centered on strengthening one's relationship with God.

The study findings on motivations to become part of, remain in, and return to the faith provide indications of stability of religious conviction and commitment among respondents. For second-generation JWs raised in the faith, the data provide additional insights into the degree to which their decision to be baptized may have been influenced by parental or other pressure.

Asked to recall the religious education received from their JW parent(s), 91.3% of second-generation respondents agreed that their parents wanted them to adopt the same religious beliefs. Yet the indicators point to autonomy rather than compulsion: Only 14.5% agreed that their JW parent(s) tried to control their life choices, contrasted with 20.2% of those raised by non-JW parents reporting this view. In other words, JW parents' desire for their children to adopt their faith did not generally translate into a perception of being coerced. Further evidence that JW parents encouraged their children to personally reason about their religious choices is shown in the 76.7% who said they could ask questions about their beliefs and the 77.2% who indicated they were taught to think about their decisions. The perceived benefits were reflected in the 89.1% who stated that their religious values helped them as adults. By contrast, those with non-JW parents reported markedly lower levels on these measures.

Family Life: Marriage and Household Composition

JW marriage patterns show high commitment, high stability, low conflict, and strong adherence to norms of fidelity and mutual respect regardless of spousal religion. Of married respondents, two-thirds had a JW spouse, allowing comparative analysis with those in mixed-faith marriages, most of whom were female. Overall, nearly 95% of all respondents agreed that having the same religious beliefs contributes to a happy marriage. Nevertheless, using a well-known measure that gauges long-term commitment and satisfaction in marriage, a comparison of same-faith and mixed-faith marriages found consistently high scores for both groups: Those with JW spouses scored 33.2 of 35 points, and those with non-JW spouses scored 29.9 of 35. Both groups strongly rejected religious differences as an acceptable reason for divorce. And 99.7% rated fidelity—a strong value in Witness beliefs—as a primary factor for a happy marriage.

Although it may seem a minor cultural observation in relation to marital happiness, half of Japanese wives in an independent opinion poll expressed dissatisfaction with their husbands' minimal help with housework; whereas 96.1% of JW males rated sharing house chores as an important factor for a happy marriage, even more than female JWs.

The majority of second-generation respondents reported having multiple family members in the faith, though the age of the respondent at the time of their conversion was reported only in the case of parents. Over 60% reported having JW siblings, and a small percentage had JW grandmothers (10.9%) and/or grandfathers (3.2%).

Family Life: Parenting and Child-Rearing

Family environment. The environment in which a child is raised is a key factor in childhood outcomes. A majority of respondents (89.5%) stated they were "very" or "somewhat satisfied" with their family life; conversely, 7.7% were "very" or "somewhat unsatisfied." Family satisfaction was higher among second-generation respondents (93.9%) than first-generation respondents (86.0%), and among those married to a Witness spouse (96.4%) than those married to a non-Witness (85.3%).

Measures of family functioning that examined cohesion, expressiveness, and conflict found reports of overall high functioning, with higher scores in same-faith marriages than in mixed-faith marriages.

Over 90% of total respondents agreed that their family members "really help and support each other," and three-fourths agreed that their families have "a feeling of togetherness." Over 80% agreed that they "can talk openly" and "tell each other about personal problems." Almost one-third reported some level of anger in their families. Overall, most reported low rates of familial conflict. Notably, family functioning scores rose significantly among those with more years in the religion.

Parenting and discipline approaches. In connection with child socialization in family values, individual parents' approaches to child-rearing and discipline are relevant, as are broader cultural norms regarding child discipline. Respondents were asked for both their recollections of past discipline they received, as well as their current views.

The total sample was asked to retrospectively rate the types and frequencies of discipline their parents used, with response options ranging from "never" to "very often." An overall analysis of parental and school discipline by decade showed a peak in physical discipline in the 1970s and 1980s and then a steady decline, with a marked rise in instructional discipline, that is, commending and explaining good or bad behavior. Specifically, respondents with non-JW parents recalled that frequency of physical discipline remained between "never" and "very rarely," while instructional discipline hovered around "rarely." Respondents with Witness parents consistently recalled being physically disciplined "very rarely," while rates of instructional discipline rose steadily from "sometimes" in the 1970s to just below "frequently" in the 1990s, with a further rise after 2000. Adult children's recollections—particularly among younger respondents—indicate a clear shift toward instructional discipline and away from physical punishment.

Societal and study-population trends moving away from physical discipline were reflected in the views of around 80% of all respondents, who said they considered hitting with an open hand or object as "very rarely" or "never" acceptable; similar percentages indicated that parents should "frequently," "often," or "very often" give instructional discipline, such as commending or explaining why behavior is good or bad. Responses for JWs with minor children at the time of the survey indicated even stronger views, with about 90% stating that hitting with an open hand or object are "very rarely" or "never" acceptable, and around 85% stating that parents should "frequently," "often," or "very often" give instructional discipline with commendation and explanations for behavior.

Moral and religious education and adolescent autonomy. Jehovah's Witnesses consider it a parental responsibility to teach children respectfully about sex and morals, and a majority agreed that teachers also have a role in sex education. Regarding religious education by one's parents, relatively high numbers of respondents did not agree that their children should learn about different religions (57.0%) or the religion of both parents (41.0%). However, they highly agreed that parents should consider children's needs as they grow (91.4%), progressively give children more freedom (87.6%), and allow grown children to choose their own religion (96.4%). These data show a strongly held parental responsibility to impart moral and religious education, and at the same time a commitment to children's long-term autonomy. As discussed, earlier findings corroborated the perception of personal choice, as most second-generation respondents disagreed that their JW parent(s) coerced them to accept the parental faith.

Despite the earlier finding showing parental emphasis on religious socialization of their children, a measure of time spent on weekly activities indicated that families spent a greater proportion of time on family activities (such as meals and time together) than religious activities, markedly so for parents with minor children. These family activities potentially facilitated cohesion and communication.

Social Attitudes: Moral Values, Priorities, and Prosocial Orientation

As is common among devout individuals in religious communities of all kinds, Jehovah's Witnesses rated adherence to their religion's moral standards as a high priority, whether observed by others or not.

Other-focused priorities, such as maintaining a clean conscience, respecting others, and caring for those in need were rated more highly than self-focused priorities, such as personal success or an interesting job. A striking example of the nonmaterialistic priorities of JWs is the 80% of respondents who ranked career advancement as "low priority" or "not at all a priority." This finding is of interest considering that most respondents reported experiencing little or no economic strain, as mentioned above.

Similar values evidently govern the life concerns of respondents. The highest ratings were for family and personal safety, health and well-being, freedom of worship, ecology, and family relationships, with lesser concern for employment and politics in Japan. These rankings provide important insights into the life choices Jehovah's Witnesses individually prioritize.

Survey respondents evaluated changes in their relationships with relatives and nonrelatives after they became Jehovah's Witnesses. In all cases, the most common rating was "same as before – good," followed by ratings of "slightly better" or "significantly better," with the highest improvement in relationships with spouses. Ratings of "significantly worse" or "slightly worse" were lower for all types of relatives, while a comparatively higher percentage (20.3%) reported worse relationships with friends, perhaps in part due to a shift in values. Good or improved ratings after becoming JWs were also reported for relationships with those whom they offended or those who offended them.

The data cannot determine the precise role that religious influence may have played in reported improvements in relationships after becoming JWs. However, the findings corroborate the priorities and concerns expressed by JWs for maintaining good interpersonal relations.

Within their congregations, Jehovah's Witnesses reported high levels of mutual support and inclusivity on a personal and group level. These findings of social cohesion and shared values within JW congregations align with the indicators of religious commitment among respondents noted earlier.

With respect to JWs' position in the wider society, nearly all respondents (94.8%) reported having seen media coverage that they felt misrepresented their faith. Smaller numbers reported other types of discrimination, such as being "insulted," "offended," or "treated suspiciously" for being Jehovah's Witnesses. Some parents also indicated that teachers needed to intervene to safeguard their children from physical or verbal attacks from fellow students. When applied to the entire Jehovah's Witnesses community in Japan, the number of such incidents is concerning.

Regarding prosocial behavior in general, a majority of respondents indicated they would help others in need in all categories, but the likelihood varied according to the person or situation. Highest certainty was expressed for a person of the same religion, followed by someone of a different religion, a poor person or a family with many children, government official or police, or a rich person. About 82% indicated they would "likely" or "definitely" help a person in need who left Jehovah's Witnesses, while 15% found it "difficult to answer." Fewer respondents felt they were "likely" to help an alcoholic or drug addict, with larger proportions finding it "difficult to answer." The ambivalence reflected in "difficult to answer" responses for the last three items ("someone who has left the organization of JWs," "an alcoholic," and "a drug addict") may be due to the perception that the conditions are partly due to personal choices and helping may involve some risk. In all categories, the percentages of those who definitely or most likely would not help were few to none.

The readiness to help others reflects the moral orientation seen in other findings, such as stable religious commitment and seeking good relationships with others. Further implications of a prosocial outlook are noted in JWs' views on their responsibilities toward society as a whole.

A measure of views on civic responsibilities and illegal or unethical acts found near-unanimity in stating

that unlawful acts such as impaired driving, wrongly claiming government resources, tax evasion, and use of violence "never can be justified." As confirmation of earlier responses rejecting the suggestion that they had been subject to coercion or pressure to join the faith, an overwhelming 99.1% of respondents stated that to "force, coerce, or bribe someone to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses" can never be justified.

A corollary to JW respondents' rejection of illegal acts is their view of civil authority in light of their religious position of political neutrality and their deeply held ethic of nonviolence. In rating their views on these moral positions, over 90% of respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they would not use arms or harm others owing to their respect for life and that they would remain neutral in political matters. They also affirmed that they respected government laws and considered their peaceful behavior and tax compliance as ways of helping their country.

Examples of the application of religious principles to a variety of personal and social situations provide further indications of how the religious affiliation of Jehovah's Witnesses influences their quality of life and social interactions. In this context, the final section examines the views and choices of respondents in more direct, personal circumstances that affect them and their children.

Physical and Psychological Well-Being

The study findings on Jehovah's Witnesses' views on health habits and medical treatments align with their religious belief that life is a gift from God to be treated respectfully and in harmony with biblical guidelines.

Views on health and medical care. Statistics on diet and exercise habits, regular health checkups, and avoidance of substance abuse indicate a general tendency toward health consciousness among the JW study population. Respondents self-rated their current health condition as "excellent" or "good" (36.6%) and "satisfactory" (41.6%). Over 40% rated their health as slightly or much better after becoming JWs, though the data do not demonstrate a causal connection.

With near-unanimous consensus, JW respondents indicated that they would seek medical care for themselves when sick. They also believed that their children's health and well-being is a parental responsibility. In contrast to low levels of trust in doctors among the general population in Japan, almost 85% of JW respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that doctors care about their patients. Accordingly, over 80% of the total sample reported having medical checkups "regularly" or "sometimes."

At the same time, JW respondents overwhelmingly indicated their wish to be involved in healthcare choices, many stating that patients should consult with specialists when making medical decisions. JW parents of minors replied similarly concerning situations involving their children. Virtually all respondents rejected faith-healing through prayer, which is not a religious practice among JWs.

Views on blood transfusions. It is well known that Jehovah's Witnesses have a religious objection to blood transfusions. This view is reflected in study results on common medical treatments, the vast majority of which were deemed acceptable to respondents for themselves and their children.

Of the total sample, 97.8% indicated that they would not accept a blood transfusion. Respondents universally indicated their rejection of blood transfusions as being based on biblical grounds and the religious view that blood is sacred. In addition to religious reasons, fear of blood contamination was also an "important" or "very important" reason for 61.9%. About 11% indicated that being "afraid of negative repercussions from JWs" was a "very important" (3.7%), "important" (7.6%), or "somewhat important" (19.5%) reason to refuse a blood transfusion; whereas for nearly half (49.8%), this was "not important."

A total of 98.3% of parents with minor children would refuse blood for themselves. Of parents who answered definitively, 89.1% would refuse a blood transfusion for their child; while 1.1% stated that they would accept blood. Another 8.3% found the question difficult to

answer; of these, half were females who were or had been in a mixed-faith marriage, which might involve shared decision-making.

Presented with a hypothetical scenario in which the child accepted a blood transfusion against a parent's wish, the majority (90.8%) of parents stated that they would not reject the child as their own. In a second difficult scenario in which a child might be transfused against the parent's wishes, the majority of parents reported that they would still seek medical treatment for their child, with 60.4% agreeing and 13.3% disagreeing. Another 21.4% did not agree or disagree, of whom over one-third were females who were or had been in mixed-faith marriages.

Psychological well-being. Respondents positively rated changes in psychological outlook since becoming Jehovah's Witnesses. As with similar questions about relationship changes and health changes, no causal conclusions can be drawn. However, respondents in all three areas mostly indicated good stable conditions or improvements. Generational differences were manifest in the findings, with first-generation respondents reporting lower baseline conditions ("same as before – good") and substantial improvement after adult conversion. In contrast, second-generation respondents reported higher baseline conditions but less subsequent improvement. Although many factors affect psychological outlook, these differences may in part reflect the effect of religious upbringing on factors such as self-worth, hope, and well-being.

Views about periods in their lives from past to future show a clear pattern of increasing positivity, with ratings of the distant future at 91.0%. Measuring specific feelings toward the future, "confident" rating was the highest reported with 45.3%; "hopeful" was next at 28.9%; and "anxious" followed at 12.2%. An assessment of the hope index returned a score of 39.5 out of 48, with high agreement on statements such as "I have a faith that gives me comfort" and "I am able to give and receive caring/love." Reported percentages indicated low levels of loneliness or fear of the future among respondents. The high positive-outlook results stand out against the pervasive pessimism that researchers have noted in Japanese society today, especially among younger generations.

In rating their life satisfaction, JW respondents reported a mean score of 7.6 out of 10. Scores were similar across generations, including for those who had stopped and then resumed association with the religion. Married JWs reported the highest life satisfaction levels. The longer respondents had been baptized Jehovah's Witnesses, the greater life satisfaction they reported, a similar pattern to that observed with family functioning.

Concluding Synthesis

JWJ-QS survey produced evidence-based research that yielded insights into the religious community of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan by probing their relationships with their personal religious faith, religious community, family members, proximate social circle, and wider society as a whole. The survey produced a large and geographically comprehensive sample, supported by random cluster sampling, academic oversight, and data cleaning and scientific analysis, to generate an approximately representative dataset of the JW population in Japan.

Although the cross-sectional design precludes causal conclusions, JWJ-QS contributes to several areas of scholarship by providing one of the first large-scale datasets on a minority religious community in Japan. The findings expand empirical knowledge in the fields of religion and health, family and socialization studies, and minority-religion research, identifying associations between religious engagement and positive orientations toward family functioning, personal decision-making, and well-being. The study also offers a methodological contribution by demonstrating the feasibility of rigorous, independently overseen survey research among religious populations.

The study population, whether young or old, new or longtime adherents, generally described their religious affiliation as a carefully considered personal decision. Survey responses indicated no widespread perceptions of coercion or pressure in matters of faith adoption and practice. Respondents described parental moral

and religious education and discipline approaches that combined firm, consistent guidance with allowances for children as they matured. The results highlight clear differences between first- and second-generation Jehovah's Witnesses that suggest patterns associated with religious upbringing as one possible interpretation of these generational differences.

Although stated attractions of the religion were largely cognitive and spiritual, social elements, such as shared religious values and congregational support, were also noted among multigenerational JW families and some of those who temporarily left the community and eventually returned. Respondents were attracted to the faith for a variety of reasons—intellectual, spiritual, and social—and this combination was associated with consistently high, long-term commitment and very low levels of regret among those who continue active association, even within a minority-religion context.

The family stability, cohesion, and satisfaction generally reported by respondents compared with factors often linked in prior research to positive family outcomes. These included marital commitment, parental warmth, high family cohesion and communication, and time spent together.

Evidence for intergenerational transmission of religious faith is consistent with existing research showing that conditions such as combined high family functioning and parental warmth in religious families increases the likelihood of children adopting their parents' religious identity as their own. Although a minority of respondents noted personal struggles, the survey as a whole consistently reflected generally positive social and psychological outlooks.

Survey responses regarding health and medical decisions reflected a tendency toward proactive health consciousness. Respondents also confirmed adherence to specific religious convictions, namely, a near-universal rejection of blood transfusions for religious reasons. Overall, respondents indicated high levels of trust in medical professionals, broad acceptance of common medical treatments, and personal health habits consistent with a high value on the quality of life.

In summary, taking into account the cross-sectional design, self-reporting, and focus on current congregants, the findings indicate the following observations: Across several domains, the data show a broad pattern of alignment between religious beliefs and positive assessments of family life, personal decisions, and moral values. In family relations, social ties, and health habits, respondents generally reported stable or improved conditions. Positive family, social, and health conditions may result from or may encourage continued religious belief and practice. Regardless of the degree to which such positivity is attributable to their religious affiliation, the findings suggest that higher religious engagement is associated in some way with positive perceptions of general well-being and long-term satisfaction both in religious life and within families of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Limitations

This cross-sectional, nationally distributed survey supports descriptive and comparative inferences; it does not identify causal or directional effects. The sampling frame comprised baptized adult Jehovah's Witnesses attending Japanese-language congregations in Japan; perspectives of minors, unbaptized associates, or former members were outside the scope.

Several measures relied on retrospective recollection which might be subject to a degree of recall bias. Cultural response styles in Japan (e.g., midpoint responding, reticence about interpersonal conflict) may influence distributions and should be considered in cross-context interpretation.

Instrument-level considerations include the questionnaire's length (possible fatigue for a subset of respondents) and elevated DNK/DNA selections for some items, indicating construct inapplicability for part of the sample; future iterations can reduce burden and increase relevance via shorter forms and tighter skip logic.

Comparisons with external statistics (e.g., census) are approximate because of differences in methods and should not be read as direct equivalences. Although the sample was geographically broad, its age and gender distributions differ from Japan's overall population; without a national registry, population representativeness cannot be verified.

The instrument did not capture grandparental baptism dates or a direct generational-status variable, limiting analysis of third-generation transmission. Finally, because no registry exists, the study cannot produce population rates of disaffiliation or reaffiliation; it reports respondent-level experiences observed here.

Future Research Directions

JWJ-QS provided the first effort to produce a comprehensive research-based portrait of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan with findings well-grounded by evidence-based methods. Because empirical research on Jehovah's Witnesses who continue to practice their faith is relatively rare, the conclusions could be further tested by follow-up qualitative investigations or longitudinal quantitative studies. Cross-cultural replication of similar surveys in other countries could more clearly highlight religious factors versus cultural or societal factors, and comparative designs across national contexts would help clarify which observed patterns are unique to Japan and which are common to JW communities across the globe.

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